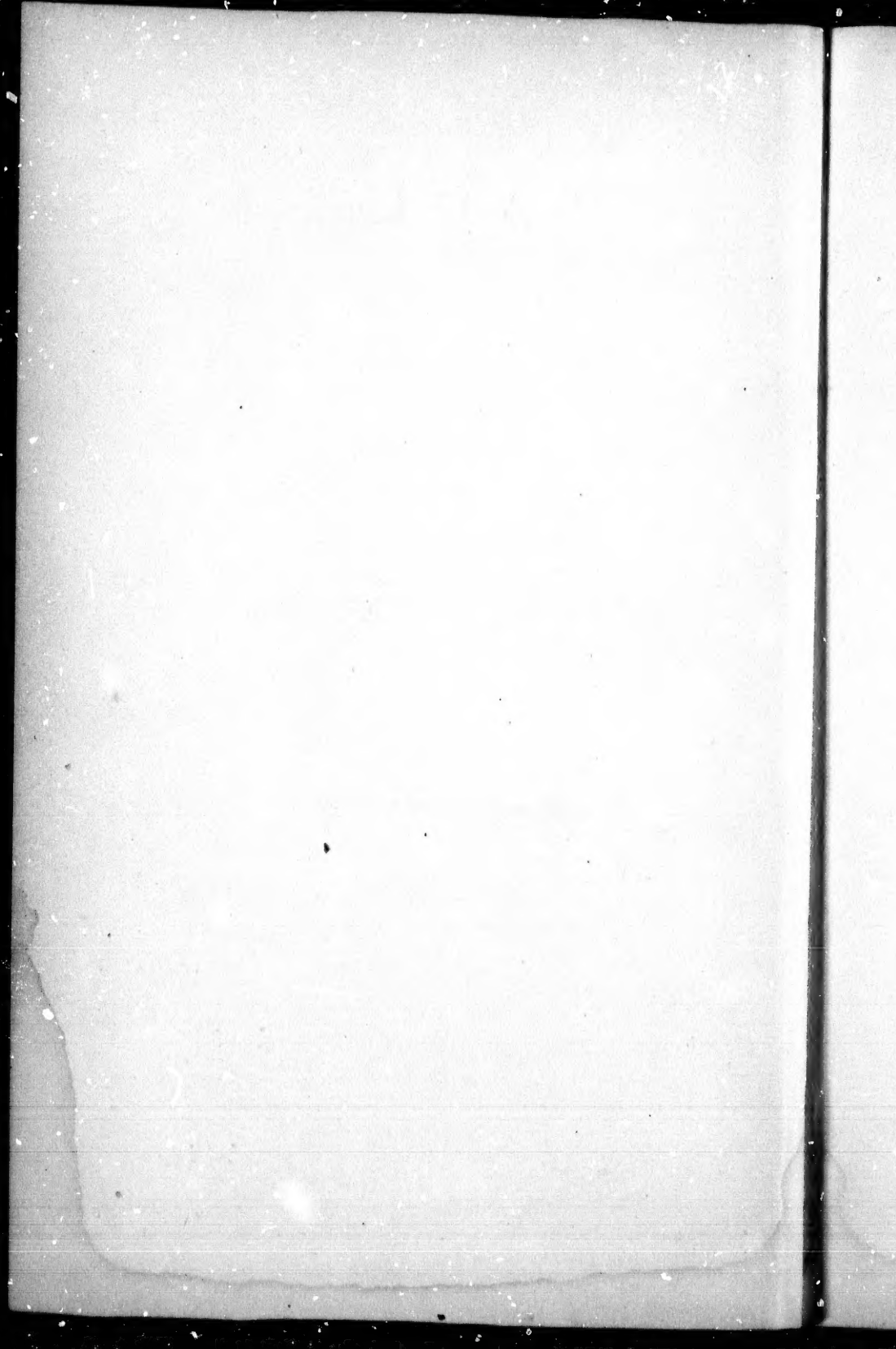




SAUL:

A DRAMA, IN THREE PARTS.

BY

CHARLES HEAVYSEGE.

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SAUL.

FIRST PART.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

SAUL, *King of Israel.*

JONATHAN, *his Eldest Son.*

ABNER, *a Relative of Saul, and a General in his Army.*

SAMUEL, *High Priest of Israel.*

JEHOIADAH, *a Priest.*

AHIAH, *a Priest.*

DAVID, *a Young Shepherd, and subsequently King of Israel.*

JESSE, *Father of David.*

AHINOAM, *Queen of Israel.*

GLORIEL, *Chief of the Celestial Spirits.*

ZOE, *Saul's Guardian-angel.*

ZELETHA, *controller of Malzah.*

ZAPH, *Chief of the Evil Spirits.*

MALZAH, *the "Evil Spirit from the Lord."*

ZEPHO, *Zaph's Messenger.*

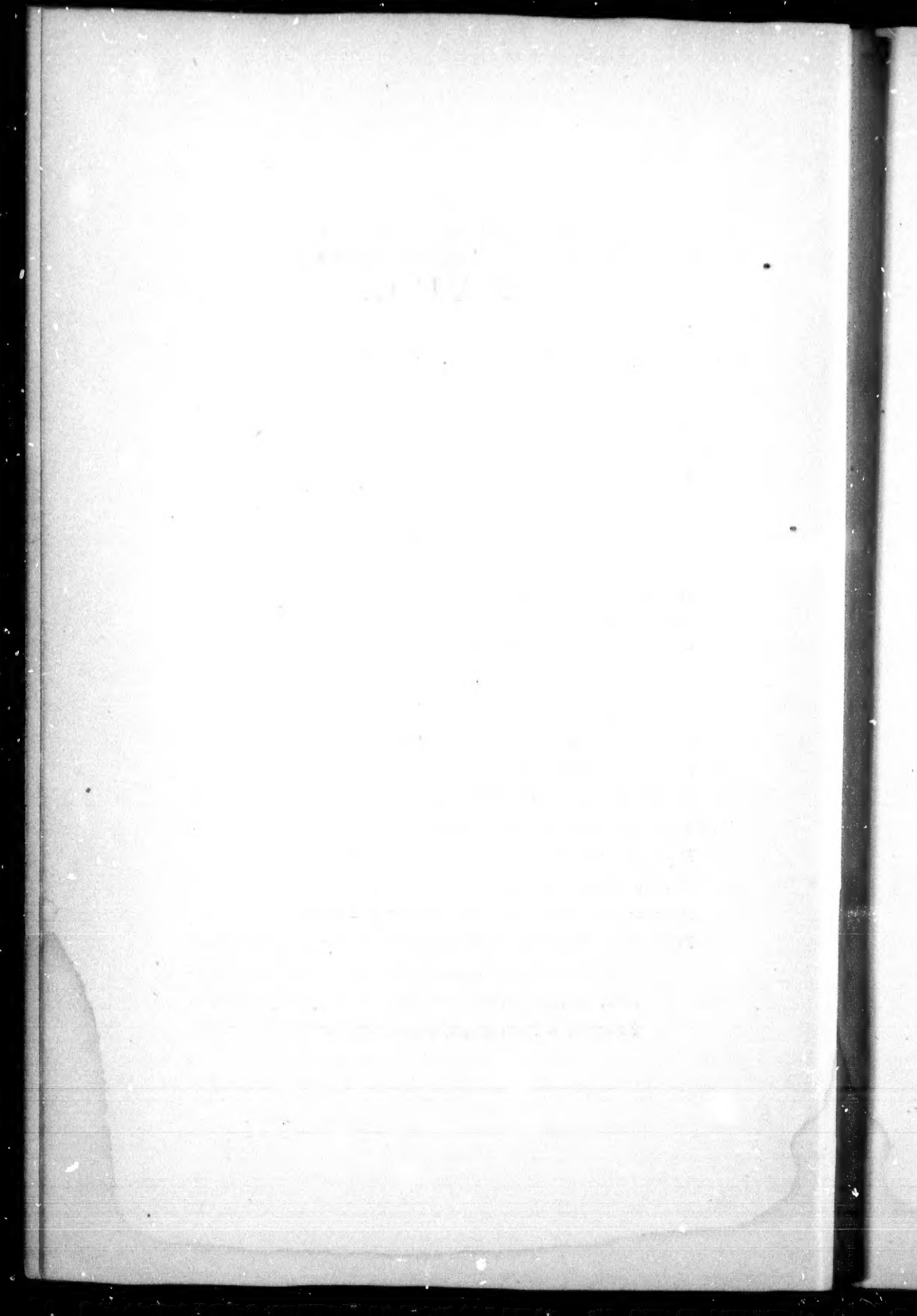
PEYONA, *an Evil Spirit, and consort of Malzah.*

PROPHETS, ELDERS, MESSENGERS *from Jabesh-Gilead,*

OFFICERS, SOLDIERS, *a COURTIER, a LEVITE, a PEAS-*

ANT, SAUL'S ARMOR-BEARER, JONATHAN'S ARMOR-

BEARER, a PHYSICIAN, DOMESTICS of the Palace, &c.





S A U L.



ACT I.

SCENE I.

The Hill of God, with the Philistine garrison adjacent. A number of DEMONS dancing; ZAPH, their chief, observing them, and ZEPHO gazing intently in an opposite direction.

ZAPH.

Gently; this is sacred ground:
Foot it in a quiet round.
Zepho, keep a keen look-out,
Whilst yet wilder grows the rout.

What now beholdest thou?

ZEPHO.

A rabble,
Marching here with moan and babble.

ZAPH.

Of what composed?

ZEPHO.

Of prophets mostly.
With solemn sound they stalk quite ghostly;

And, 'midst them, one whose height and port
Declare him of superior sort.

ZAPH.

Dost thou know him ?

ZEPHO.

Methinks I do.

ZAPH.

Strain through the air thy lylix-like view.
(*Aside.*) With such oft angels come and danger.

ZEPHO.

Yes, now I know the towering stranger :
His name is Saul, one Kish's son.
His father's asses lost, he 'd gone
To seek them ; but a diadem
Has found instead of finding them :
And they now iound, he home doth steer,
'Midst plaintive sound approaching here.
Which news I learned as late in Ramah,
Unseen, I walked ; and this small drama
There viewed myself : upon Saul's head
A cruse of holy oil saw shed
By Samuel ; who then hailed as king
This Saul, and kissed him, promising
That signs should happen to him three,
The last of which you soon shall see :
Two are already.

ZAPH.

Spirits all,
A stranger comes whose name is Saul.
He has lately been, I hear,
By Samuel, Israel's great seer,

Anointed to hold future reign
In this divinely-ruled domain.
With him come prophets, chanting loud,
And others, a promiscuous crowd.

FIRST DEMON.

Then dancing's over !

SECOND DEMON.

'T is not so !

Why should we our mirth forego ?

THIRD DEMON.

Thus our mirth doth ever die !

SECOND DEMON.

Hearken ! they "Jehovah !" cry.
Lo ! on footsteps slowly falling,
Loudly on Jehovah calling,
See them doleful drawing nigh.

*(Enter SAUL and a company of PROPHETS and SPECTATORS,
the PROPHETS chanting.)*

PROPHETS.

Jehovah ! Jehovah ! O Israel's God,
In pity look from thine abode
Upon us low.
Thou who once brought our fathers up
From Egypt, and made Pharaoh stoop,
Stoop thou in mercy from thy throne,
Descend and hearken to our moan ;
Do thou strong for us interpose ;
Oh, look again on Jacob's woes !

THIRD DEMON.

This is dreary.

FOURTH DEMON.

I'm in tears.

SECOND DEMON.

Dry your eyes, and ope your ears.

ZAPH.

Keep each countenance decorous :
A solemn scene unfolds before us.

SAUL (*recitative*).

On Jacob thou hast looked, O Lord,
According to thine ancient word.

FIFTH DEMON.

He knows not that.

ZAPH.

Your tongues restrain :
The prophets now will chant again.

PROPHETS (*in chorus*).

Thou who beholdest all the earth,
Whose ark o'erthrew the God of Gath ;
From Egypt's bondage brought us forth,
Saved us from Moab's and Ammon's wrath ;
From Amalek and Edom saved
Thy people, though they misbehaved ;
Who gave them manna from the skies,
And from the rock bade waters rise ;
Long led them toward this promised land,
Across Arabia's burning sand,
With cloud by day and fire by night,
An awful yet celestial light, —
Jehovah, hear, swift let thy spear
Of vengeance terrify our foes !
O God, attend ; thine ear down bend :

SAUL.

9

Oh, let the time of sorrow close, --
This access of thine Israel's woes !

THIRD DEMON.

Were this not better than the last,
I now from hence had fled aghast.

ZAPH.

Hist :
Let not a syllable be missed.

SAUL.

The Lord, at length, hath looked upon
His heritage : your cry hath gone
Even unto his holy hill.
God shall your ardent wish fulfil.

PROPHETS.

How long, how long, how long, O Lord,
Shall Israel mourn !

SAUL.

From sorrow turn.

PROPHETS.

Say, Lord, how long the land shall be
In shadow of an enemy :
How long shall we with outrage meet,
And wrong possess the judgment-seat ?

SAUL.

I heard the Lord arise and swear
Jeshurun was his special care.

DEMONS (*shouting in chorus*).

Ha, ha ! ha, ha ! beware, beware ;
Such was once *our* special fare :

Mocketh all things the Creator,
Mocketh his whole realm of nature ;
Think not sons of earth he'll spare
Who smote the nobler things of air.

PROPHETS.

O God, give ear, Jehovah, hear :
Is Israel still to thee not dear ?
Didst thou not once, for Abram's sake,
Them thy peculiar people make ?
O God, arise, and Ammon shake !
Jehovah !

DEMONS.

Ha, ha ! ha, ha !

PROPHETS.

Jehovah !

DEMONS.

Ha, ha ! ha, ha !

PROPHETS.

Jehovah !

DEMONS.

Ha, ha ! ha, ha !

PROPHETS.

Almighty one !

DEMONS.

He'll hear anon :

Ha, ha ! ha, ha ! pray on, pray on.

PROPHETS.

Oh, heal our hurt !

DEMONS.

'T is princely sport

To hear them sue in such a sort.

ZAPH.

Grow not too loud and insolent ;
Who can turn God from his intent ?

Haply He indeed hath meant
 Good, quick coming and spread wide,
 Over Israel's mourning pride.
 Cease your laughter ; it may come after.

FIFTH DEMON.

Master, it is many a day
 Since thy servants grew so gay ;
 Let them laugh, then, while they may.

ZAPH.

Peace ; Saul sings.

SAUL (*air*).

I.

O Canaan fair, my country dear,
 Lo, thy deliverance draws near!
 The spear is raised, bent is the bow
 That shali thine enemies o'erthrow.

II.

Thy grief is passed, thy mourning done;
 Put now bright Hope's clean garments on:
 The Lord regards thee from the skies;
 He bids thee from the dust arise.

III.

Fair Land of Promise, clothe in smiles
 Thy landscapes, thy neglected piles;
 For thou shalt be redeemed ere long
 From foreign foe, domestic wrong.

IV.

O land that worship'st the true God,
 Behold on high his outstretched rod!
 Rise ! bid the alien from thee flee :
 The Lord, the Lord is yet with thee !

SAUL.

FIRST DEMON.

- This seems the true prophetic vein.

THIRD DEMON.

Too proud by far that lofty strain.

FOURTH DEMON.

He is deceived.

FIFTH DEMON.

Yet who deceived him ?

ZAPH.

There hath none

With a lie unto him gone.

SECOND DEMON.

'Tis the confidence of his nature.

ZAPH.

Rather is it his Creator
Who this hour him works upon.

SIXTH DEMON.

'Tis tedious here.

ZAPH.

Hence let us hie ;
Hark ! I hear, though faint yet clear,
Spirits coming down the sky !

*(The DEMONS vanish, and a company of ANGELS, conducted
by GLORIEL, descend.)*

GLORIEL.

I heard the sound of spirits quick departing.

FIRST ANGEL.

Yonder o'er the hills they 're darting.

GLORIEL.

If my sentiment be true,
They who lately hence withdrew
Belong unto the fallen crew.

Let Saul be guarded : —

Zoe, to thee that task 's awarded :

Fare thee well.

[*Exeunt ANGELS, ZOE remaining.*]

A PROPHET.

Tall stranger, whosoe'er thou art, we see
That God is with thee ; therefore come with us.

SAUL.

I'll follow you. (*Aside.*) Three signs were promised me,
Which have in kind and number come to pass.
Soon as I Samuel left, my heart was changed ;
And now I feel that which I cannot name :
Solemnity and courage fill my soul,
That, war intending, yet sits throned in peace.

[*Exeunt SAUL and the PROPHETS.*]

ZOE.

I must attend him whom to me is given
To guard from hell and gently guide towards heaven.

[*Exit ZOE.*]

FIRST SPECTATOR.

Know ye the name of yon gigantic figure,
That, eminent o'er all, with haughty port,
Enrapt stood prophesying, and now stalks
Like some great purpose hence ?

SECOND SPECTATOR.

'Tis Saul ; and, lo !
The burden of his words was hope for Israel.

THIRD SPECTATOR.

Is Saul amongst the prophets ?

SECOND SPECTATOR.

Thou perceiv'st.

See how sublime he moves ! To free the land,
Shangar and Sampson were not likelier.

FOURTH SPECTATOR.

Speak low. Let's separate ; we know not whether
There be not here some spy of the Philistines.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

Country near Gibeah. Cattle grazing at a distance. SAUL, after being anointed king by Samuel, has returned home to Gibeah, and is there occupied as formerly.

SAUL, musing.

How tame now seems to me this herdsman life !
Unprofitable too : naught do I here,
Naught that can serve good purpose : I am like
A taper that is left to burn to waste
Within an empty house. Why do I stay ?
Others could tend these herds as well as I, —
And haply better, for my thoughts are far
From meads and kine, and all the servile round
Of household duties, same from year to year, —
Alike far from the rural dull routine,
And traffic of the town, when I repair
To exchange my herds and corn for silver shekels.
Yet I will bide my time : — and yet the steer
Puts forth his horns when his due months arrive,
And pushes with them though they be but tender ;

The blade starts through the clod in spring ; the leaf
On the high bough sits in its pride of green :
The blossom, punctual to its season, comes,
Milk-white or ruddy ; and the perfect fruit
Appears with autumn ; nor the snow doth fail
The hoary winter. Doth the snake not shed
Its slough ? the fledgling leave its natal nest ?
Twice what I once was now I feel to be !
Down, proud imagination ! silence keep,
Thou rash impatience ! — and yet Samuel said,
“ Now God is with thee, act as thou seest fit.”
What should I do ? Deem this less zeal than pride,
And here in all tranquillity abide. [Exit.]

SCENE III.

Contiguous to a Hamlet.

Enter three HEBREWS and an ELDER.

FIRST HEBREW.

We are to assemble, sayest thou, to-morrow ?

ELDER.

To-morrow to Mizpeh is all Israel summoned ;
There to receive a king from God and Samuel :
Loudly, with others, you demanded one.

FIRST HEBREW.

We did and do demand one ; and with reason,
For Samuel is grown aged and his sons
Corrupt.

SECOND HEBREW.

And yet, 't is said he was displeased
At our resolve, and gave, at first, no answer.

ELDER.

He did from us, — (for I was one of those,
Who were deputed by you to convey
To him your wish), — he did from us retire,
As we supposed to ponder your request
Alone, and lay it before the Lord ; but soon
Returned, and in such sad and solemn style
Foretold the issues of our granted wish,
That, for a season, we stood wavering ;
As might the headstrong wind, when, having blown
Out of one quarter strongly, on a sudden,
As if uncertain of its next direction,
It restless veers, travelling nor east nor west,
Nor north nor south ; so we, surprised,
Perplexed, revolving, and not knowing whether
To retain this evil or accept of that.

FIRST HEBREW.

What said he to you ?

ELDER.

That our king should be
Exacting and despotic ; that, indeed,
The nation no immunity should have
Beneath his rule, — naught sacred from his grasp :
Our sons, our daughters, lands, our labor, skill, —
In fine, our all, should yield to him subscription.

SECOND HEBREW.

Already a tenth the Levites are endowed with.

ELDER.

He said our king would tithe the residue.

FIRST HEBREW.

To that your answer ?

THIRD HEBREW.

Did you not remonstrate?

ELDER.

We still preferred your prayer, — "Give us a king."

SECOND HEBREW.

But did you not make stipulations? urge
Abatement of those hard prerogatives?

ELDER.

No; for how could we, seeing they were rather
Foretold by the grieved prophet than ordained;
As though the king would don them with his crown,
And wear them as his true and natural garment.

THIRD HEBREW.

I wish that I had but been of your number!
I would have spoken boldly for the nation.
What! were you not our representatives?

ELDER.

What could we save reiterate your prayer, —
"Let us be governed like to other peoples;
Let a king rule us in the days of peace,
And lead to battle in the hour of war"?

THIRD HEBREW.

Here's a dilemma!

FIRST HEBREW.

Well, I will repair
To Mizpeh to-morrow, and behold the man
Who shall hereafter in the name of king
Cause us to tremble. Will he dream to-night

■

Of his approaching fortune? If the choice
Should fall on me, woe falls on you, good men.

ELDER.

Approach this crisis in a proper spirit ;
For it will be the Lord to-morrow at Mizpeh,
And by his grace shall reign whom then is chosen.

THIRD HEBREW.

'Twixt King and Levite little will be left us. —
I shall not go to Mizpeh.

ELDER.

Thither go,
At the grave summons.

SECOND HEBREW.

Grave it is for all ;
But most for those who have fair wives and daughters.

FIRST HEBREW.

The King would take our wives?

THIRD HEBREW.

Would he'd take mine!

SECOND HEBREW.

He'd take our sons if strong.

FIRST HEBREW.

Ourselves if skilful.

SECOND HEBREW.

Our property, our lands. — Unjust and cruel! —
I know not whether I shall go or not.

FIRST HEBREW.

What have we done in our dim discontent !

THIRD HEBREW.

None than yourselves have been more loud for change.

SECOND HEBREW.

Yes, for a change from bad to better ; — but this
Were to exchange gray twilight for black darkness.
Beshrew our folly ! there's worse state than Priest-
dom. —

Still, let's prepare to start betimes to-morrow.

[*Exeunt the three HEBREWS.*]

ELDER.

Thus are we ever stricken with dismay
When Heaven has granted our undue desires. —
These men are daunted at their answered prayer,
And wear but ill their countenance of courage.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE IV.

Mispeh.

Sound of a multitude at a distance. Enter HEBREWS, meeting.

FIRST HEBREW.

Say, have you seen the king ?

SECOND HEBREW.

The king we 've seen.

THIRD HEBREW.

And so have we. How seems he to your eyes ?

FOURTH HEBREW.

A lion, and a tiger, and a man,
Agreed to dwell in one grand, gloomy den.

FIRST HEBREW.

If his spirit answers to his form, — and I
Believe it does, — he is the very being
For our occasion ; which has grown so foul,
It needs the Evil One to scour it fair ;
And I suppose, from your description, sir,
He is that personage.

FOURTH HEBREW.

I do not jest.

FIRST HEBREW.

Nor I.

FOURTH HEBREW.

Hast thou not seen him ?

FIFTH HEBREW.

Seen him ! Yes :
T' avoid it would have been most difficult.
E'en taller by the shoulders than the crowd
He moved ; and loftier bore his head above it
Than bears a swimmer his above the waves.
From every point he was conspicuous.

SECOND HEBREW.

He's of strong passions doubtless.

THIRD HEBREW.

I observed,
When Samuel told us that we had rejected
God's rule in asking for ourselves a king,

His countenance fell, surprised : and I remarked
He bit his lips, and symptoms of displeasure
Spread o'er his face ; but soon they passed away,
And left him as before.

FOURTH HEBREW.

Did he foreknow
He was the great king coming ?

FIRST HEBREW.

Fitness always
Knows whether it be worthy, though it knows
Not whether 't will be chosen : and although
Incompetency oft mistakes its meed,
Ability ne'er does. It is a foolish
Saying, " The wise know not their wisdom, nor
The fair their beauty."

FOURTH HEBREW.

Then, 't was surely strange
He should conceal himself amongst the baggage.

THIRD HEBREW.

But when they found him, marked you not his mien ?
Thence slow he came, and seemed to know his
worth : —

And once I fancied that he looked too proud ;
Contemplating with a disdainful look
The myriads around him. — Hark ! they shout.

[*Shouts of " God save the King ! "*]

Let's join the throng. Rolls hitherward the rout. [*Exeunt.*]

(*Enter SAUL, a band of HEBREWS following him.*)

SAUL.

You say you will go with me ? Then, so be it. —
If prompted, follow me and be the ball,

Tiny at first, that shall, like one of snow
Gather in rolling.

A HEBREW.

We will follow thee
Wherever thou shalt lead.

SAUL.

To Gibeah, then ;
And you shall soon have scope to prove you men.
[*Exeunt omnes.*]

SCENE V.

*The country near Gibeah. SAUL, returning from the field,
observes the people weeping.*

SAUL.

Why do the people weep ?

A HEBREW.

Oh, sorrow, sorrow !
Thou too wilt weep when thou hast learnt the cause.
Nahash the king of Ammon has besieged
Jabesh Gilead, which has promised to surrender
In seven days, if sooner none relieve it :
And on this sore condition, that the wretch
Shall pluck out the right eye of every man
Within the place, that with the hideous deed
He may reproach hereafter every Hebrew.

SAUL.

Hear me, O God ! Jehovah, hear thy servant !
So be it done to me and unto all
To me belonging, yea, and tenfold more, —

If more can be by living man endured, —
 If I shall fail to drive this monster back.
 Ye shapes of wrath, avenging cherubim,
 Ye scourges from the presence of the Lord,
 Ye dark, destroying angels that forth fly
 To do heaven's judgments, turn your course towards
 him. —

Go, hither send the bearers of this news.

[Exit HEBREW.]

Now, every motive that can bring fierce strength
 To my resolve, come double to my heart :
 Hear me again, O God, vouchsafe to listen.
 If I should not perform beyond my vow,
 May I and all in Israel be disfigured ;
 Woman, youth and maiden, child and infant, all
 Be brought to *total* darkness. Dusky fiend,
 Who would come on us, bringing demi-night,
 And quench forever half our light of day !

(The HEBREW, re-entering with the MESSENGERS.)

Behold those here who can thine anger raise.

SAUL, to the MESSENGERS.

Go, tell the men of Jabesh-Gilead
 To fear not that foul Whelp of Twilight, Nahash :
 They shall have aid.

A MESSENGER.

Seven days he has given us ;
 And if in that time we be not relieved,
 Submit we must unto his ruthless terms.

SAUL.

Away ; fear not.

[Exit the HEBREWS and MESSENGERS.]

No further words ; let deeds
 Come next. Now, herds and flocks, a last adieu :

Men henceforth are my flock, my pasture Canaan :
 I will forthwith to Bezek, and there raise
 My standard ; then woe be to them who follow
 Not Saul and Samuel !

SCENE VI.

Near Bezek. The gathering of the Hebrews. Time, evening.
SAUL standing upon an eminence.

SAUL.

The ground is hidden with men ; the heights appear
 Like rouséd ant-hills, and the valleys swarm
 With moving life. Where will these myriads be
 In fifty summers ? even in thirty years
 Half of these multitudes will gorge the grave :
 In twenty more a miserable remnant
 (Drained of the force, if not the fiery courage,
 That brings them here to-day) will sole remain
 To tell of deeds as yet undone : — in fifty
 Summers to-morrow's uncommencéd feat
 Shall be a hoary tale ; yon thronging actors —
 Each now impatient to perform his part —
 Shall most be quiet in the peaceful grave :
 Even as the snow-drifts left on Lebanon
 In the hot days of June, few, few they'll be.

(Enter MESSENGERS of the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead.)

Haste on to Jabesh-Gilead, lest should fail
 The hearts of its inhabitants, to yield
 Themselves precipitately to the Deg,
 In the fond hope thereby to soften him :
 To-morrow, by the time the sun is high,
 They shall have help : quick, get you over Jordan !

FIRST MESSENGER.

If ever blessing fell on man, mayest thou
Be blest, our meant deliverer from shame ;
For is not Samuel with thee, and with him
Is not the Lord, as once at Eben-ezer !

SAUL.

Go ; I will succor you.

SECOND MESSENGER.

The winds of heaven
Behind thee blow ; and on our enemies' eyes
May the sun smite to-morrow, and blind them for thee ;
But, O Saul, do not fail us !

SAUL.

Fail ye ! No :
Let the morn fail to break ; I will not break
My word. Haste, or I'm there before you. Fail !
Let the morn fail the east ; I'll not fail you,
But, swift and silent as the streaming wind,
Unseen approach, then, gathering my force
At dawning, sweep on Ammon, as Night's blast
Sweeps down from Carmel on the murky sea.
Our march is through the darkness. Now begone ;
We'll hear no further tili our task be done.

[Exeunt MESSENGERS.]

If gratitude and earnest prayer, from them
Who have such cause for either, be a pledge
Of coming victory, we shall to-morrow
Have given the idolaters a wound
That all the balm of Gilead, which they claim,
Will not suffice to heal : — a wound so deep,
That they will think grim Jephthah lives again :
Or that the old Zamzummim giants, whom

Their sires destroyed, have sent a soul from hades
 Who comes incarnate, leading Israel's ire ;
 So dearly shall this haughty siege yet cost them.
 Our forces are beginning the swift march,
 Which must continue through the coming night :
 I will descend and lead them, as is fit. [Exit.

SCENE VII.

The vicinity of Jabesh-Gilead. Time, dawn. SAUL, pacing to and fro.

SAUL.

The day breaks calmly, howsoe'er it end ;
 And nature shows no great consent with man,
 Curtailing not the slumber of the clouds,
 Nor rising with the clarion of the wind
 To blow his signals. I o'erhear the foe
 Arousing hastily his sleeping legions :
 Ammon perceives us. Wherefore comes not Abner ?

ABNER, *entering*.

We're ready to assault.

SAUL.

And so am I.

Thy force lead as I bade thee. Jonathan
 His orders has : like thee, he'll quit him well.
 Prompt let us be, and not more prompt than fell.

[Exit ABNER.

"Prompt" is the word upon the tongue of time,
 From day to day on echoing through the years,
 That glide away into eternity,
 Whispering the same unceasing syllable.

Boy, bring my arms ! — not now we'll moralize,
 Although to fight it needs that some must fall.
 When this day's work is done, and serious night
 Disposes to reflection and gives leisure,
 We will review the slaughter's bygone hours,
 And, while from earth to heaven ascends a dew,
 Distilled from blood now throbbing through its veins,
 Sorrow for whom we must. Till then we'll act :
 Survive who may, retain who shall his breath,
 We'll now assault, and 'gin the work of death.

(Enter a youth, bringing the shield of SAUL.)

Why loitered'st thou ? Quick, give to me my shield ;
 Now quit thee well on this thy virgin field.

[Exeunt, and a sound of trumpets heard, with an increasing noise of the onset. At length Ammonitish soldiers are seen fleeing across the hills, and Hebrew soldiers in pursuit. Enter an AMMONITISH SOLDIER, a HEBREW pursuing him.]

HEBREW.

Die, cursed Ammonite !

AMMONITE.

Oh spare me, spare me !

HEBREW.

We well can spare thee : die !

[Kills him, and exit ; and enter another AMMONITISH SOLDIER, pursued by a HEBREW.]

AMMONITE.

Here, fifty shekels for my ransom take !

HEBREW.

Dost offer me what I shall win perforce ?
 Though thou hadst fifty lives, I fifty times
 Would take the fifty, though thou offered me

Full fifty shekels for each several life.

Die. (*Plundering him.*) Wretch, I take thy shekels,
and for them

I give to thee thy meed, -- mortality.

[*Exit, and enter a HEBREW OFFICER and men.*]

OFFICER.

Vouchsafe no quarter to the enemy.

This moment, money must not mercy buy.

[*Exeunt, and enter another HEBREW OFFICER with men.*]

OFFICER.

Grant but quick death unto the Ammonites :

They are the driven sand, and ye the whirlwind.

[*Exeunt, and enter yet another HEBREW OFFICER with men.*]

OFFICER.

Urge after them : the foe before you flies

On wings of wild astonishment and terror.

In loose array our army presses Ammon's,

That broken speeds past rallying ; and both drive

Like two black, ragged clouds before the gale.

[*Exeunt, passing across the field, and enter ABNER with others.*]

ABNER.

Still onward, men ; and do not stop for breath,

So long as Ammonites are yet in view.

[*Exeunt, passing across the field, and enter JONATHAN with others.*]

JONATHAN.

Pray that the sun and moon again stand still ;

And if they may not, outstrip you fleet Time,

The never-tiring racer : speed your heels,

And in the moments do the work of years.

Now is the hour of vengeance : sternly slay ;

Check not your steps ; press forward while you may ;
Wield well the sword till Saul shall bid you stay.

*[Exeunt, followed by the rest of the army in a straggling
and irregular manner.]*

SCENE VIII.

Another part of the Country.

Enter SAUL and a TRUMPETER, OFFICERS and SOLDIERS.

SAUL.

Now let the trumpet sound the call to halt,
No two of the pale foe are left together,
And all have thrown away their arms : indeed,
So quick a thaw I never knew before,
Nor vapor melted faster into naught.
Look, and say what remains within the view.

FIRST OFFICER.

Save where yon quarry flees before our hounds
(Forgive the use of such a simile),
The landscape shows no trace of Ammonites,
Who've gone much faster than they came, and left
Behind them baggage, and rich spoils of war.

SECOND OFFICER.

This day they will remember long as they
Shall keep a calendar. Boy, blow, and let
Thy full heart leap into thine instrument,
And dance for joy a measure : in thy horn
Thou wilt not stumble o'er the stony dead.

[The TRUMPETER blows the recall.]

SAUL.

Welcome that blast, the signal of reprieve
To yonder routed remnant, that must else
Have fled before the hornets of our arms,
Until the total and tormented host,
As by flying scorpions, had been stung to death.
Even yet there is a sting within our souls,
That goads us once again along to sail,
As dragons of the desert, after them,
With standards spreading like wide, wasteful wings.

[Returning his sword to the scabbard.]

But let us sheathe these trenchant ministers ;
For, by the souls for whom they've hewn a passage
Unto some far, mysterious gehenna,
Or to the troubled sepulchre of the air,
They have well done. Behold of plain and hill
They, aided by the bow and spear, have made
A very shambles with the enemy's slain,
That lie in heaps before the walls of Jabesh,
And thence to this grow fewer, like the drops
Of blood sore oozing from the savage beast,
Fleeing before the hunter till 't is drained.
We have drained this day the pride of Ammon. Lo !
As when October strews the land with leaves,
So hath our fury larded it with dead.
And yet I pity them, poor breathless wretches !
And gladly would revive them, if I could,
Would not the exasperating memory
Of those dire terms provoke me to rekill them.

THIRD OFFICER.

Would Saul reanimate the ruffians, who
From Jabesh-Gilead might have crossed the Jordan ?
Would he one Ammonite the less had suffered ?

SAUL.

31

SAUL.

No : they are all too few, though many, since
Nahash is not amongst them. For his fault
They fell, huge holocausts of Nahash's cattle,
Who, in an ill hour, drove them to this slaughter.

[Enter JONATHAN, followed by OFFICERS and SOLDIERS.
How fares it with our son ?

JONATHAN.

How fares my father ?

SAUL.

Well, as it ought, so ill-faring with our foes,
Who'll rue the day wherein they crossed our borders.

JONATHAN.

But few of them remain to retrace them
Who lately, big with meditated pæans,
Came gayly tripping o'er the hills, but now,
In lieu of chanting lyrics of loud joy,
Upon the lowly ground lie dead and dumb,
Or only live to breathe forth lamentation.

ONE OF JONATHAN'S OFFICERS.

Ere the recall's far-pealing note had reached us,
Our soldiers were disputing for the victims
They had so far diminished.

FOURTH OFFICER.

Can it be

That we so soon have reaped so rank a field,
And scuffle for the gleanings ! Nahash has
Escaped us.

SECOND OFFICER.

Greater curse yet overtake him !
May lightnings sear his sight, and may nor sun
Nor the sweet stars again by him be seen.

FIRST OFFICER.

Thou Moon, rise not to him ; nor break again
On him, thou Dawn.

THIRD OFFICER.

Ye hearth, ye altar fires,
Expire when he looks on you.

FOURTH OFFICER.

Ye women's eyes,
Unto his gaze seem bleared with sudden age,
Or show but horror.

FIRST OFFICER.

Yea, let all bright things —
Eyes, gems, sun, stars, noon, dawn, domestic fire,
And, what the maiming monster loves yet more,
The lustre of the sword, shield, chariot, —
War's glare, — be dark unto him as the grave.

JONATHAN.

Amen, amen ! — See how my father's rapt.
I'll speak to him. Father, but yesterday
These Ammonites at Israel scoffed secure,
To-day they are destroyed.

SAUL.

Like waving ears
Of lusty corn, upright we are to-day ;
To-morrow are laid low by the fell sickle
Of something unforeseen.

JONATHAN.

Now Jabesh-Gilead
May in all safety point scorn's living finger

At the cold heaps of dead around her walls ;
 And boys and women, yea, and tottering hags,
 Go pull them by the beard, or, with their nails,
 Extract, unchecked, pale corpses' eyeballs, angling
 Unhurt within those reservoirs of tears :
 Yea, out of dead men's mouths may pluck the tongues
 That yesterday at this hour bullied them.

SAUL.

Who tower in triumph grovel in defeat.
 See how the birds are gathering to the feast !
 Thus death feeds life, that is the prey of death.
 Yonder behold the stealthy fox comes forth,
 Like a camp-follower, to rob the dead !
 And, lo ! the unclean kite draws nearer, as
 The vanguard of the volant scavengers.
 Let us return, and leave it for the vulture,
 Smelling the odor of mortality,
 To hasten here, and batten. — But who comes !
 Bid blow the trumpets, and outroll the drums.
*[Trumpets sound, and drums are beaten, and SAMUEL
 enters, followed by a crowd.]*

SAMUEL.

Hail, Saul, anointed of the Lord ! Great hail
 I give thee, son to whom the Lord hath given
 To lead his people, that ye both might drink
 Deep vengeance and o'erflowing victory,
 Baring for Israel his warlike arm :
 Great hail I give thee ; and from these all hail !
(Acclamation of the multitude, and signs of great joy.)

SAUL.

Hail, holy seer ! hail, men of Israel !
 Ye men of Israel, thank the Lord to-day ;

For 't is his power that hath before you driven
Nahash and all the Ammonitish crew.
All did I say ? how little now their all !
You have destroyed them in their arrogance ;
You have dissolved them with the wand of change.
Last evening they lay down amidst their camp,
That gleamed in starlight ; but no more shall they
See stars nor morning, for their eyelids fast
Are sealed by frosty death. Where now is Nahash ?
Fallen, fallen is the cruel pride of Ammon !
Its warriors strew for many a league our land,
And the wild beasts devour them : they shall have
No grave except the fox's maw, and belly
Of unclean beasts ; while with their sires shall lie
But few of those fast-footed fugitives,
For as, with herd-like trampling of their flight,
The dust-cloud rose, we laid it in their blood.
Dearly they 've paid for their grim proposition !
Let them come seek their slain, unless tears blind
Those who, with bloody deeds, had this day thought
To have blinded others. Let Nahash gnash his teeth ;
Now let him howl at home, and ask his gods
Wherefore they thus forsook him. Joy, O joy !
The God of Israel is above all gods !

(Renewed acclamation.)

ONE OF THE MULTITUDE.

Let those who said " Shall Saul reign over us ? "
Be put to death !

ANOTHER.

Yes, let them die.

MANY at once.

They shall.

SAUL.

To-day no man shall suffer death, for God
To-day hath saved and gladdened Israel.

*(Further acclamation, and cries of "God save the King!"
"God save King SAUL!")*

SAMUEL.

Now let us go to Gilgal, and there crown him.

[Exeunt all, amidst acclamations and flourishing of trumpets.]

SCENE IX.

The Country. Enter HEBREWS.

FIRST HEBREW.

Pray, which of you were at the coronation ?

SECOND HEBREW.

I.

FIRST HEBREW.

And how went it ?

SECOND HEBREW.

Well, mixed up with ill.

FIRST HEBREW.

What happened ? did the people change their minds ?

SECOND HEBREW.

No, but we had committed a great sin
In asking for a king ; so Samuel told us,
And, to confirm his saying, called on God
To send down rain and thunder, though 't was harvest.

FIRST HEBREW.

Ah, then your revelry was changed to sorrow.

SECOND HEBREW.

'T was, for a while ; but Samuel reassured us ;
 Showing us that, as in the past, Jehovah
 Had saved us by Jerubaal, Bedan, Jephthah,
 So he would now — if we were faithful to him —
 By our anointed king. Yet was it fearful
 To see the sky fast darken, and to hear
 The thunder-growl approaching, until one
 Broad flash of lightning quivered from the clouds,
 And hung above us, glaring like the eye
 Of God dread gazing on us in his wrath.
 All trembled, all stood mute, excepting some
 Who, motionless, low muttered deprecation.
 Few dared uplift their eyes ; and the hurled deluge,
 Smoking upon the ground, that shook with din
 Beneath us seemed to speak intense displeasure.

FIRST HEBREW.

How then looked Samuel ?

SECOND HEBREW.

Rapt.

FIRST HEBREW.

And Saul ?

SECOND HEBREW.

I saw him stand, methought, half frowning ; but
 Terror so shook me and confused my sight,
 That scarce I knew what was and what was not.

THIRD HEBREW.

This augurs ill.

SECOND HEBREW.

The worst is past, and all
Depends, 't would seem, on us and our behavior.

FOURTH HEBREW.

What else said Samuel ?

SECOND HEBREW.

Much. He challenged us
To prove injustice 'gainst him in his rule ;
And, in the event of it, offered restitution.

FIFTH HEBREW.

Referred he to his sons' flagitious doings ?

SECOND HEBREW.

No.

FOURTH HEBREW.

Let their evil in his good be lost ;
As is the filthy and defiling smoke
Lost in the purer air.

FIFTH HEBREW.

Yet recollections

Will stick like smuts upon one's memory :
And Samuel's whiteness, though it may reflect
A light on his sons' blackness, but thereby
Doth show it forth more ugly than we thought it ;
And they unfitter seen, or now to aid him
Or to succeed hereafter ; their demerits,
Illuminated by his worthiness,
Showing yet greater than they first were fancied ;
As an apartment's dusty atmosphere,
With bars of golden sunshine streaming through it,
Shows more polluted than had been imagined.
But let that pass : what more declared the prophet ?

SECOND HEBREW.

He showed us that the priestly government
Had come from God by Moses and by Aaron.

FIFTH HEBREW.

His order, yes, the spirit of his order,
Gave utterance there : all power it had before,
Which now must be divided with another.
The old man, certainly, is stung at seeming
To be cast off by us in his old age :
But what is done is done, and for the best ;
Huzzah, then, for the King !

THE OTHERS.

Huzzah for King and Priest !

[Exeunt omnes.]





ACT II.

SCENE I.

Michmash. A handsome Apartment.

Enter SAUL and JEHOIADAH, a priest.

SAUL.

I know that tempest and a foul disease
Discomfited and humbled the Philistines ;
But nor the weather nor painful emerods
Are always at your bidding ; nor is Samuel
Immortal, that he should have still the power
To pray for you, and raise new Eben-ezers ;
And when he's gone, what's Levi ! Ye will say
The Lord will raise new Samuels up in Israel.
Hath not the Lord raised me ? caused mine anointing ?
God is our helper, our deliverer, sayest thou ?
God now shall help us in another way :
He shall assist me to transform the Hebrews
To men, they who till recently were children,
Fickle, offending him by fresh relapses ;
Yet, in the hour of danger, crying to him
As babes, when smitten, bellow for their mothers ;
Or spendthrifts, clutched by angry creditors,
Beg from their sires fresh sums to purchase pleasure.

Priest!
et omnes.

All this is changed, for none again a-whoring
After strange gods shall go, as erst they did ;
Nor demons nor the stars consult shall any.
Henceforward war and agriculture shall
Be ours, as war and commerce are our foes',
Whose discipline with discipline we'll meet.
Nor from henceforth, with raw and instant levies,
I cope with the trained armies that Philistia
Persists in sending 'gainst us: I more men
Must have, and more of Israel's substance, ere
I open the campaign, which shall not close
Until the land is cleared of aliens ;
Then must I turn within and look for foes
Intestine, they who wear, indeed, friends' faces
Yet are masked traitors, and, with envy filled,
Go about carping at us. Nahash's ruin
Was but the first work of the rude purgation
That I intend for Israel ; her at length
No enemy shall ravage, nor shall any
Of hers malign her king without a cause.
I have too patient been of opposition ;
Hence my scant force, whose numbers are no more
Than, say, two thousand here and at Mount Bethel,
And Jonathan's one thousand men at Gibeah.

(JEHOIADAH *remains silent.*)

Why ponderest thou ? Might they be stationed better ?

JEHOIADAH.

The nation murmur that your Majesty
Hath taken these three thousand men by force ;
And that, so taking them, you did select
None but the fair of form and strong of sinew ;
Seizing, as spoil, the prime of all the people.

SAUL.

41

SAUL.

The people have provokers, whom, if I
Perceive, I will cut off! Tell me, dost thou,
When needing for the altar a new victim,
Not still require a creature void of blemish?
And shall not I lay hands upon the best?
Can work be without means? and if I be
A king, shall I forego the pomp and state
Wherewith a king's surrounded? Let beware
All idle tongues, or I will pluck them out,
And haply, in my indignation, throw them
Into their owners' faces.

(Enter a COURIER.)

Say, what news?

That news thou bring'st thy wayworn plight declares,
And good should be its burden by thine eye: —
From Jonathan comest thou?

COURIER.

From him I come,
Your Majesty, and bear you joyful tidings:
I all the night have hurried on to bring
You glorious day: — his Highness, Jonathan,
Hath routed the Philistine garrison
At Geba.

SAUL.

My brave son! How happened it?
What provocation, other than their presence,
Incited him to assail them? — or were they
Our son's assailants?

COURIER.

Them the prince assailed;
And for he would, and gave no reason save
He could and would.

SAUL.

SAUL.

Now we shall stink i' the nostrils
Of proud Philistia, who will all her war
Soon launch against us. — Well, so let it be. —
At Gilgal we must rapidly assemble.
I will reward thee, welcome messenger.
Follow me, Jehoiadah. [Exit SAUL]

COURIER.

You scarcely seem
To like my news, good father.

JEHOIADAH.

Sirrah, check
Your tongue. Wouldst have me rush into the street
And there cry "Hallelujah!" [Exit JEHOIADAH.]

COURIER.

"Sirrah" me?
Lean Levite! It is well that thou art gone,
Or, by my sword, thou sour, disdainful priest,
This hand had else profaned thee. All the tribe
Of Levi have been cankered from the hour
That we obtained a king. Why, let them fret,
And fall away like watered lime: their pride
Long time has needed humbling.
[Exit, and enter a DEMON, of ZAPH's band, laughing.]

DEMON.

Ha, ha! ha, ha! there went a priest
That does not love the king i' the least;
And there a king may mischief brew: —
A king may rule, and priest may too;
But, when that reigneth, this must rue. —
Hark Saul's rolled drums!

The echo comes
Of blasts swift trumpets loudly blew !
I must away,
This very day,
To where Zaph lurketh with his crew.

[Exit.]

SCENE II.

The Country near Gibeah. Enter, in haste, HEBREWS from different quarters.

FIRST HEBREW.

Philistia, Philistia again !
Philistia comes surging like her sea,
Now lashed to fury by the gale from Geba.
"To Gilgal, unto Gilgal !" is the cry : —
The king is gone, and with him the three thousand.

SECOND HEBREW.

We heard the tocsin sounding through the day.

THIRD HEBREW.

And we along the echo-answering hills
Beheld the beacons blazing in the night ;
Fire answering to fire as sound to sound,
As though to match the replicated peals ;
Till o'er the whole horizon's sleepy round
Awoke the wondering eyelids of the dark. —
The king is prompt.

FOURTH HEBREW.

Yet not more prompt than needs
To meet the swift-hoofed squadrons that outstrip

The arrow's flight : so let us after him,
 For Samuel is to join the host at Gilgal. —
 What is thine arm ?

THIRD HEBREW.

The sword. What thine ?

FOURTH HEBREW.

Fellow, what thine ?

The spear.

FIFTH HEBREW.

A cudgel.

FOURTH HEBREW.

Thine ?

SIXTH HEBREW.

The sling.

FOURTH HEBREW.

And thine ?

SEVENTH HEBREW.

I'll bear a banner for the king.

EIGHTH HEBREW.

I draw the bow.

NINTH HEBREW.

I throw the dart.

TENTH HEBREW.

And I

Am master of all arms.

FOURTH HEBREW.

Enough : let us along ;

And though you fight not, you will swell the throng.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

Near Michmash. SAUL and JEHOIADAH reconnoitring the Philistine encampment.

SAUL.

Would that yon host were mine, or mine as well
Accoutred, and prepared for instant war !
But we must meet the foe with such rude means
As the haste-prompted hand of our surprise,
Too long disarmed, hath furnished us ; nor doubt
That Samuel's presence, with the sure belief
A victory has been for us ordained,
Shall help to wring one from the iron grip
Of yonder splendid soldiery, that seem
In number greater than the burning stars,
Their arms and armor making the dull earth
More shining than the heavens ! How like a camp
Of bright, descended angels they appear,
As thus the sun illumes their brazen mail,
And silver-sembling arms of glittering steel !
They are tall fellows ; chariots too I see,
That fly on wheels as angels on swift wings.

JEHOIADAH.

Why did his Highness rashly fall on Geba ?
Unless God interpose, we cannot meet
The anger of enraged Philistia.

SAUL.

Peace, peace !

JEHOIADAH.

'T was premature, your Majesty :
The God-appointed time had not arrived.

They had not sought Jehovah ; headily
This struggle was begun ; 't was ill advised
To vex the enemy without permission.
We cannot e'en withstand, much less o'erthrow,
The array of yon embattled armament,
With which compared thine 's but a rabble rout.

SAUL.

Thou lately thought'st a rabble was as good
As are disciplined bands.

JEHOIADAH.

Nay, but thou hast
No chariots, thy cavalry are weak :
Thy followers many, but the enemy's horse
Count twice the number of thy chosen men :
In vain will be our uttermost resistance.

SAUL.

How often have our ancestors driven back
The bold begetters of that mail-clad host !
Let Samuel come, and thou shalt see them fly.
Why doth thy master tarry ? and, for thee,
Philistine-fearing, pale, protesting priest,
Wouldst hold the prince's virtue as a vice ?
Let Samuel come, and thou shalt see what thou
Hast only heard of, — Jonathan's brave deeds :
We wait the prophet here to sacrifice ;
But had he not enjoined us to delay,
We straight had given battle to the foe,
Expecting Heaven's assistance. — But he's right ;
The vulgar, to whom courage is not native,
And who have not acquired by proud traditions
The fear of shame and dainty sense of honor,

Must by religion's rites obtain the valor
Which best is carried ready in the heart.

JEHOIADAH.

If Samuel come, and if the Lord be willing,
Doubtless our army shall have victory.

SAUL.

We are not serving other gods ; yourselves
His altars load with smoking sacrifice,
And I with death stern punish those who still
Resort to demons lieu of light of Urim ;
Then wherefore downcast hangest thou thine eyes,
E'en as if Dagon, Seignior of the Sea,
Could cope with Him who rules both land and main ?

JEHOIADAH.

If Samuel come not —

SAUL.

Come not ! He has promised.

JEHOIADAH.

Our army is as water theirs as fire.

SAUL.

Detractive spirit, let us back to Gilgal.

[Exit SAUL.]

JEHOIADAH.

Ay, let us back to Gilgal. Samuel loves him,
But I detest him, and should any king
Detest, for kings must overshadow our order.

Exit JEHOIADAH.

SCENE IV.

In the Hebrew's camp, at Gilgal. Enter SAUL.

SAUL.

Come ! Samuel, come ! Why lingers Samuel ? Age
Should prize the present, since so brief its future.
May all the blest fortuities combine
To urge him hither.

(*Enter ABNER.*)

Well, what cheer ?

ABNER.

Not well ;

Our army is by far too faint of heart.

SAUL.

So I suspected.

ABNER.

Nay, they shame me ; for
They are appalled even by the mere report
Of the foe's mien, as he lies couched at Michmash.

SAUL.

I knew it ; yet thy words do half unman me,
And swell in me uneasy apprehension
Of evil threatened by Samuel's delay ;
For should we be attacked ere he arrive,
What were all generalship, all zeal and courage, —
The valor of a few conjoined with cowards ?
I never deemed them heroes, but so soon
To fall a-trembling doth indeed enrage me.
Go whisper them the Seer's expected hourly.

[*Exit ABNER.*]

A gently floating rumor will assure them
More than a confident blast : Come ! Samuel, come !

[*Exit SAUL.*]

SCENE V.

Another part of the camp. Time, the following day. Enter three HEBREW OFFICERS meeting.

FIRST OFFICER.

What news?

SECOND OFFICER.

The king has issued a command
To kill all found deserting.

THIRD OFFICER.

Then he'll kill us

As fast as the Philistines could desire him :
O shame! O shame! I am ashamed to own
The craven herd to be my countrymen.
How must the foe be scoffing, if they know it!
Even as the countenance of the sun dispels
Hoar-frost, so has the enemy's mere presence
Made vanish half our army, which now hides,
E'en by whole companies, in caves and thickets,
In clefts of rocks, on mountains and in pits ;
And some have e'en o'er Jordan beat retreat
To Gad and Gilead, and the remainder
Tremble like women.

SECOND OFFICER.

Lo, the king comes hither,
Swift striding, and in angry fashion speaks
To his companions, whose own aspects borrow
A grim reflection from their master's wrath. [*Exeunt.*
(*Enter SAUL, ABNER, and Saul's ARMOR-BEARER, a youth.*)

SAUL.

He who retreats from the Philistine's eyes
Now runs directly into death's black jaws ;

None can escape. I have the camp surrounded
With those who will not spare: if more choose flight,
Let them dig downwards for it to the grave.

ABNER.

Ay, let them dig to hell; for they no outlet
Above the ground shall find to pass our lines.

SAUL.

Had but our pack of mongrel hounds kept heart,
Our lines had been a leash from which they 'd sprung
At the enemy's throat, so soon as I had slipped the snare;
Nay, at the utmost of defeat and death,
These fields, to the perished, might have been the gates
And earthly entrance into heavenly meads.

ARMOR-BEARER.

'Tis said that all who fall in righteous battle
Go instant thither.

ABNER.

Whither else?

SAUL.

My boy,

All patriots are angels after death:
The soul that in its country's cause has staked
And lost its sum of future days can never
Visit Gehenna or darkle down perdition. —
'Tis but a dreary day, but it may brighten:
Go furbish now my armor for to-morrow.

[Exit ARMOR-BEARER.]

ABNER.

Here comes our carping friend.

SAUL.

51

SAUL.

He friend of mine!

(Enter JEHOIADAH.)

How now, unwelcome? Jehoiadah,
So, hie thee home: I have thee in such love
I cannot let thee risk thy life here longer.

[Exit JEHOIADAH.]

Fifty Philistines in the camp were better
Than his one presence with that hopeless look.

ABNER.

What different spirits animate mankind!
How unlike his from thy young armor-bearer's!

SAUL.

Mine armor-bearer! were all such as he,
Little would Samuel's absence trouble me!

[Exeunt.]

SCENE VI.

A part of the Hebrew camp. Time, nightfall of the sixth day.

Enter SAUL and ABNER.

SAUL.

To-morrow's the seventh day: let messengers
Be sent to hasten Samuel, should they meet him.

ABNER.

Already I have messengers despatched.

SAUL.

Abner, if all go well with us to-morrow
(As it is possible e'en yet it may),

And if we be not basely forced to flee
 Before the swords of the Philistine host,
 In peace I will raise means for future war ;
 As doth the husbandman in summer raise
 The crops intended as his winter food.
 I will have soldiers plenty at my call ; —
 No rabble from their fields and city crafts,
 Mustering in haste, with various arms uncouth,
 But found, scared, fleeing to their homes at sight
 Of grimmer foe than they had dreamed to meet.
 This has been my intention since the day
 Wherein I routed Nahash ; as thou knowest,
 And knowest how greed and sloth have it delayed.

ABNER.

Our nation learns not war, but the Philistine
 Is the perfection of a well-trained soldier.

SAUL.

Knowing that, I am surprised that they should linger
 Yonder in Michmash. Have they harlots, thinkest
 thou ?
 Or do they drench in wine, or chew the drug
 Of lazy satisfaction, that their ships
 Bring from the farthest corner of the East ?
 Or, as we wait for Samuel and Jehovah,
 Do they await the special aid of Dagon,
 Who now, deep revelling in his waters green,
 Or lulled in the embrace of some sea-goddess,
 Forgets Philistia's legions ?

ABNER.

WOTTON. 'T is most strange : —
 Surely 't is Heaven that restrains them from us.

SAUL.

I do believe that most of our pale remnant,
 Filled they so are with terror of the foe,
 Would flee at the first echo of his bugles,
 Blown by him to the tune of an advance.

ABNER.

I know that troops to-night will slink away,
 Snake-like, upon their bellies.

SAUL.

I think the guards are trusty.

ABNER.

So think I, —

And yet I'm doubtful.

SAUL.

Would there were no night,

For half the world abuse it. Let them go;
 Although it is ungrateful as 't is cowardly
 Thus to desert me coldly by degrees,
 As breath from off a mirror. Set the watch;
 I'll to my tent, albeit not to sleep.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VII.

The camp. Time, the morrow. Enter ZOE, as if fleeing from something.

ZOE.

O blinding hastiness ! he will not listen
 Whilst I dissuade him from impiety :
 I will not see the deed.

(Exit, and enter SAUL, ABNER, OFFICERS, and SOLDIERS.)

SAUL.

Attempt not to dissuade me, Abner : no,
Seven days we have waited, and he is not come.
Bring the burnt-offering and peace-offering to me :
'T is not the sacrificer, but the victim ;
'T is not the hand, but 't is the heart, God looks at.

(SAUL offers, and, having finished, SAMUEL enters.)

SAMUEL.

What hast thou done, Saul ?

SAUL.

Chide me not, but listen :

Seven days I've seen my forces waste away,
And camest thou not within the appointed time ;
Then said I to myself, "The enemy
Will yet attack us ere we shall have made
Our supplication," so I forced myself,
And have this moment finished offering.

SAMUEL.

Wrong hast thou done, yea, disobedient been,
Unhappy man ! for now thy dynasty
Upon the throne was to have been confirmed
Forever, and the sceptre fully given
To thy posterity, that now no crown
Shall ever wear, they by thyself discrowned,
Dethroned, thy throne now given to another
Chosen of God, and after his own heart,
To be the Captain over Israel,
Instead of thee, presumptuous and daring.

[Exit SAMUEL.]

SAUL.

Why, let him go : — how little it requires
To expose a man when taken by surprise !
We know the cause of this denunciation :
He fears I would be priest as well as king.
Not I. — Indeed, we live and see strange things.
Alas ! can he, so old and wise, have been
So snatched away by anger ? — wroth with me too ! —
Am I not higher than he ? He cannot have
Such strange and foul suspicion : — kingly cares
Alone are surely a sufficient burden
For one man's spirit to carry ! Ah, when last
We parted here 't was in a different mood. —
He said my throne was given to another ;
By me were my posterity disrowned ;
I had done wrong, been disobedient. —
I may have erred, but wherein disobeyed ?
Seven days I waited, ay, till th' skirts o' the term
Had disappeared, and with it — O, foul shame ! —
Near all my army. O fond Saul, fond fool,
To agree to such a monstrous proposition
As a week's waiting him ! Why should slow age
Chain the swift wheels of manhood ? But for his
Most stupid interdiction, I had urged
At once my road-stained car of battle down
On the Philistines. Weak-willed Saul ! regardful
Of a proud dotard's reeling, shadowy power :
Now mine reels too. Philistines now approach :
Saul is no longer able to oppose you, —
Saul, that advanced upon you wet with speed,
And would have cast against you such a tempest,
But for the o'erblowing of this old man's week,
That the whole world hereafter should have doubted
When told of such grim mischief.

SAUL.

ABNER.

My good cousin,
My high, undaunted, and anointed sovereign,
Cease raging thus in public.

SAUL.

It is false ;
Not changed is Heaven's purpose, only Samuel's.
I will not fear : though men desert me, God
Is not unfaithful : — yet how can I hope,
With such an army all composed of mist,
Such dastard wretches, such predestined bondsmen, —
How can I hope to quell the enraged Philistines ?
O that I had myself been a Philistine !
For on the unwarlike Hebrews scorn I fling,
And rue that I was ever made their king.

[Exit SAUL.]

ABNER.

I'll after him ; I know not what he'll do
In his rash humor and irreverent wrath.

[Exit ABNER, the rest retiring in silence.]

SCENE VIII.

Near Gilgal. Enter SAUL and JONATHAN.

SAUL.

All's over here ; — let us withdraw and weep
Down in the red recesses of our hearts,
Or, in our spirits, silent, curse the cravens
Whom muttered execrations too much honor.
Home, home, let us, dishonored, — home, if there
Be yet for us a home, and the Philistines

Drive us not forth to miserable exile.
Will they allow us, like an o'er-breathed hare,
Spent, to return and repossess our form? —
Will they endure us still in Gibeah?
Or must we, flying from our vacant throne,
Discover some dark den on Lebanon,
And dwell with lions? or with hungry foxes
Burrow, and depend on cunning for our food?
Better with lions and with foxes mating,
Than be companions of the brood of Israel;
Yea, better with the hill-wolf famishing
Than battening with the herd that forms the world.

JONATHAN.

Alas, my sisters, —

SAUL.

Alas, thy mother; — she
The silent critic on my life. Thy mother
And sisters may be forced, ere long, to dwell
In some dank cave, or o'er the borders flee
With us, and seek in some strange realm asylum.
Why, let it be so; we can live 'midst strangers.
Of all the myriads who followed us hither,
How many are left us?

JONATHAN.

But a poor six hundred.

SAUL.

Ay, is my picked three thousand dwindled so!
What next! what next! There is no virtue left
In mortal man, — nay, women had done better.
O Jonathan, thy glorious deed at Geba,
Put out unto unworthy usury,
Is lost in Gilgal's issue!

SAUL.

JONATHAN.

Yearn not o'er me.
What we have done, O king and sire, is ours,
Part of ourselves : — yea more, it will not die
When we shall, nor can any steal it ;
For honor hath that cleaving quality,
It sticks to us, and no one may remove it
Save our own selves by future deeds of baseness.

SAUL.

We never were so poor since we grew rich.

JONATHAN.

We will grow richer than we yet have been ;
And, from this need, yet heap up such abundance
That we shall wonder why we ever grieved
At this petty pilfering.

SAUL.

"Pilfering!" that's the word.

Yes, Jonathan, we have been meanly pilfered ;
Rats have been stealing grain from out our garner :
Each runaway was a rat ; and for seven days
An ancient friend still oped our granary door,
Then snapped on me the quick rebounding trap
That should have caught the vermin.

JONATHAN.

Rate not Samuel.

SAUL.

He rated me too low when he rebuked me,
And talked of ban on us, when he his garment
Ought to have rent, and his white head with ashes
Covered at sight of what his tardiness

Had caused, — the dissolution of my ranks,
And the fair tower of a well-won prestige
Mouldering and all dismantled. — Let us go.

JONATHAN.

Let's take with us the remnant of our guard :
They show the fairer from their comrades' foulness.

SAUL.

I've lost all faith in others : they'll be home
Ere we ; if not, I'll drive them, but not lead them.

[*Exeunt.*]





ACT III.

SCENE I.

The Country near Michmash. Time, evening. Enter GLORIEL and another ANGEL.

ANGEL.

My errand done, I must return above.
Farewell.

GLORIEL.

Since thou return'st so soon, farewell,
Sweet cherub. [Exit ANGEL.]

Heaven works again for Saul,
Nor will allow him utterly to fall.
Where is that able but rebellious spirit,
Zaph, ruler of the band that haunt the earth
To compass Satan's malice? At the pole
I lately saw him sitting. Him and his band
I will compel to be my ministers
On the Philistines, whilst that I myself
Inspire with hardihood Prince Jonathan.

(Enter an ANGEL of GLORIEL's company.)

What news?

ANGEL.

Zaph's hovering over Palestine:

SAUL.

61

I've dogged him from the morning until now.
I think he knows he's watched.

GLORIEL.

Go fetch him hither.

[Exit ANGEL.]

Now let a blast from out the deep arise
And push behind him ; for he will not come
Unless compelled.

(A tempest arises, and ZAPH is driven in, followed by the ANGEL.)

ZAPH.

What dost thou want with me ?

GLORIEL.

To-morrow let the day break gloomily,
And, at the hour when I shall instigate thee,
Tempt the Philistine garrison at Michmash,
And so infatuate them that each man
Shall take his fellow for an enemy.

ZAPH.

Cannot thine own do this ? I'll not obey thee.

GLORIEL.

At the same hour, let all thy company
Wander beneath the surface of the ground,
And simulate an earthquake : and let some
Emit low moanings such as those you utter
When, lonely meditating in hell's cavern,
You feel yourselves undone.

ZAPH.

Ungenerous taunt !

Ah, bitter fulness of expression ! Cruel

Amplification of a sad idea !
 Insult me not, old comrade. Gloriel,
 Think that I once thine equal was in heaven,
 And spare me, then, this drudgery. Cannot one
 Of all my band delude the garrison ?

GLORIEL.

Thou hast mine orders ; and obey them strictly.
 Remember, there is naught betwixt us now
 Of high respect and deep consideration ;
 And old equality has ever vanished.

ZAPH.

Thou pitiless cherub ! punctilious angel ! — but
 I must obey thee ; — yea, I know I must,
 For to subject me God hath given thee power.
 Alas that ever such prodigious power
 Should to one spirit o'er another be given !
 Thou harsh and haughty hierarch, may yet
 Hell's gnawing fires exhaust thee of thy strength ;
 And may'st thou some day feel the bitterness
 Thou now on me inflict'st. Curse thee, thou tyrant !
 May Acheron yet torment thee.

GLORIEL.

Curse no longer.

ZAPH.

I'll curse thee at my pleasure ! What art thou
 That I should fear to blister thee with words,
 And cover thee with epithets envenomed ?
 I hold thee light, officinary angel ;
 And if the God that made us would be neutral,
 Or would abandon thee as he hath me,
 Then thou shouldst be the slave and I the tyrant.
 A curse upon thee, ay, a curse upon thee !

SAUL.

63

GLORIEL.

Peace, demon, peace.

ZAPH.

There is no peace for me !

GLORIEL.

Go, fiend, and fail not in thy task to-morrow.

ZAPH.

I go, I go, I go ; — but there is yet
Eternity to generate thee sorrow.

[Exeunt different ways.]

SCENE II.

*A quiet street in Michmash. Time, the morrow. Enter three
HEBREWS.*

FIRST HEBREW.

Let's die at once ; let's go provoke the Philistine
To end us, for now life is void of charm !
Deride me not ; all nature is in horror ;
The cheerful sun in shame now shuns our land,
As joy avoids our hearts.

SECOND HEBREW.

See ; whilst we gaze,
Grows more portentous the mysterious gloom,
Up-piled prodigious on the slumbering earth,
That dreams of daylight, yet no daylight comes ;
But darkness lingers, and therein, obscure,
With filmy face, the sick, uncertain sun
Looms like a lamp held in a spectre's hand
To guide dim doers of unhallowed deeds.

THIRD HEBREW.

It is a gloomy morn ; a gloomier
 I never saw ; — but 't is not true the king,
 With all his court, has fled into the desert :
 He Gibeah holds, and seems to keep at bay
 (Though, with his means, it only is a seeming)
 The enemy, who menace him from Michmash.
 But come, some wine would do us each a kindness ;
 Let 's to the " Eschol," where I know are now
 Philistine soldiers drinking : we will cheat them
 At game of hazard, for the maid shall watch
 And give us signals, while she stands behind
 And for us brews a cordial. Let us enter :
 A cup shall cheer us.

FIRST HEBREW.

Rather let 's go pray.

THIRD HEBREW.

No ; better wine to drive our care away.

SECOND HEBREW.

Come on, then, brothers. — See, wine here hath sway.
*(As they are about to enter the " Eschol," a peasant, flushed with
 liquor, and carrying a coultter, comes out.)*

PEASANT.

You are three Gilgal swallows.

FIRST HEBREW.

What bird thou ?

PEASANT.

No Gilgal swallow, trust me.

FIRST HEBREW.

Meaner bird :

For thou, when others flocked with Saul to Gilgal,
Stayed in thy nest, and moulted in thy terror.

PEASANT.

Three Gilgal swallows !

SECOND HEBREW.

Swallow thine own gall.

PEASANT.

I keep the gall to grieve the Gilgal swallows.

FIRST HEBREW.

Call'st me a swallow ?

SECOND HEBREW.

Dost thou swallow me ?

PEASANT.

Thou art a swallow, and I swallow thee.

FIRST HEBREW.

Now shalt thou swallow thine own words ! Am I
A Gilgal swallow ?

THIRD HEBREW.

And am I ?

PEASANT,

All three ;—

Wilt swallow now this coulter ?

FIRST HEBREW.

Hound ! my sword

Is in Philistine keeping, or I'd slay thee ;

I'd rip thee up ; fellow, I'd serve thee out ;
 I'd broach thy kilderkin ; I'd stop thy crowing ;
 I'd find thine inmost bowels !

[*The HEBREWS enter the " Eschol."*]

PEASANT.

What a brawl !

There 's now more threat'ning in one day in Israel
 Than was within ten years when we had weapons.
 We cannot sharpen our coulters, pitchforks, mattocks,
 Save at Philistine smithies, but sharp words
 Are anywhere about the land : — the foe,
 Having removed our warlike tools, yet leave us
 The little scarlet tongue to scratch and sting with.
 Well, swords are dangerous things in angry hands ;
 And coulters are but awkward ones for fencing.

(*Singing.*)

I'll down with my coulters unto the foe's forge,
 Lay my hand on his bellows, my eyes on his gorge,
 And think, could I span it, O ho ! could I span it ! —
 Never mind, boys, never mind, boys, but some day we'll
 plan it.

I cannot crackle up, I cannot sing :
 This gloomy morning quite extinguishes me. —
 There is a nameless vapor in the air,
 That puts out merriment ; — and well it may :
 This sky is dismal as mortality.
 Well, all must die ! — and hath it not been written, —

Man is a pipe that Life doth smoke,
 As saunters it the earth about ;
 And when 't is wearied of the joke,
 Death comes and knocks the ashes out.

Something with a moral in it comes so easily
In these sad times.

*[Exit, and the scene changes to a solitary place near Gibeah.
A ravine near, and on the opposite side of it the
PHILISTINE GARRISON at Michmash.]*

*(Enter JONATHAN and his ARMOR-BEARER, — the former
pacing to and fro.)*

ARMOR-BEARER.

The day's as lowering as are Israel's fortunes ;
And it, or they, or both combined, oppress me.
I am as gloomy as the sky, or even
As Jonathan. — Alas, poor prince, how changed !
Once he would jest with me, or chat on trifles
Of home or heart, disdaining not to tell me
His boyish loves ; and show me how to fling
The spear and dart, how best to draw the bow,
How bear the shield, and how, with rapid fences,
To make the falchion hoarsely growl i' th' air :
But not so now ; as a deserted mansion,
He dwells absorbed in cold and stately grief,
And half against me shut. Gilgal's vile field,
And the east wind of Samuel's threatening,
Seem to have withered in him sense of pleasure : —
No wonder ! Unto all so kind he was,
So open, that it makes me melancholy
When thinking on the sunshine of the past,
And I return — if not for shelter, yet
In very madness — to the drizzling thoughts
Engendered by the present. Would he'd speak !
His bearing seems so threatening and disturbed.
I like it not ; now sudden standing still,
Fixed in some dark and earnest revery,
Now off at quickened pace. He's muttering,
And casts his eyes towards heaven ; — I will accost him.

(*The ARMOR-BEARER approaches JONATHAN.*)

JONATHAN.

Let us go over to yon garrison ;
It may be God will help us. Fear not, come ;
For there is no restriction on the Almighty
To work by many or to work by few.

ARMOR-BEARER.

(*Aside.*) Alas, he 's growing demented !

JONATHAN.

Follow me :

I feel strange promptings.

ARMOR-BEARER.

O your Highness,

Talk not in this wise : let my lord remember,
Heaven will not work because the Prince presumes.
Though strong and brave, my lord is not so strong
As Samson was, when he for Israel smote,
With jawbone of an ass, the scared Philistines.
Then wherefore should you fondly dare essay
His feat of fury, and great scorn of death ? —
What would your Highness do if you were there ?

JONATHAN.

I cannot tell thee yet ; but come and see.

ARMOR-BEARER.

'Tis desperate ; cast from your soul the thought.

JONATHAN.

No ; 't is an inspiration.

ARMOR-BEARER.

"Madness" call it,
Bred from your disappointment and galled heart.

Your Highness broods too much : adversity
Hath fretted you as harness frets the steed
That is as yet unbroken, urging it,
Even by its first uncomprehended touch,
To violent and self-injurious efforts
To cast it off, which only cause the Tamer
To strengthen it, and ruder ply the bit
Till the proud beast consents to do his paces.

JONATHAN.

Never shall we consent to the Philistine !
Peace. Though the iron curb be in our mouths, —
No smith allowed by our politic foe
To forge new arms, nor to repair the old,
The very ploughshares, that make war with earth,
And rip up its brown bowels, being bound
To be engendered in their licensed forges, —
We never shall be tamed to slavery
By the Philistines, whom we oft have driven
Across the borders, like a frantic steed
Rushing car-bound across the rugged plain,
And badged at mouth and nostrils with a beard
Of mingled blood and foam. Oppose me not :
Men are not cattle.

ARMOR-BEARER.

No, your Highness ; but,
Being greater, they are thence exposed to evils
That the low brute escapes ; just as high hills
Do suffer blasts of which the plain feels nothing :
Pardon me, so much the more may you, being higher
In station than the rest of Israel,
And more endowed than most with gracious gifts,
But dangerous impulse of an ardent mind,
Greatly err than I. My life is naught, but yours

Is much, or I had not withstood you. Think,
The times are evil, and what influence
There may be hovering in this dismal air,
Or thoughts pernicious coming from the clouds,
Wherein, 't is said, hide demons, naught we know : —
Suffice, that your intent wears shape suspicious.
Haply this trusted inspiration comes
From some bad spirit, who would tempt your Highness
To instant death, or unto what were worse, —
The sad estate of prisoner to the foe,
Who, by slow process might to death's shores lead you,
Or hurry you from hence into the sea
And drown you as a sacrifice to Dagon ;
Or, should their vengeance merge in policy,
Spare you to manacle the hands of Israel,
Who might not dare to strike your captors, lest
She should but bruise herself in bruising those
That, holding you, could every future blow
Retaliate by nameless cruelties
On their great hostage, even on yourself,
The blast of whose sore sufferings they'd wind
So sad upon our ears, that we should cease
To strike the foe, lest we in striking him
Should injure you.

JONATHAN.

Then I must go alone.

ARMOR-BEARER.

You are not bent ?

JONATHAN.

I am.

ARMOR-BEARER.

Then take me, though

It be unto the mouth of sure destruction :

I can but die, or live and with you suffer.

JONATHAN.

Fear not.

ARMOR-BEARER.

Lead on ; I'll follow, whither you will.

JONATHAN.

God will precede us. Bring with thee our arms.

ARMOR-BEARER.

I will, and use them, to the last, if need be.

(Having arrived at the bottom of the ravine.)

ARMOR-BEARER.

The garrison seems quiet.

JONATHAN.

Happy omen !

Now wear a moment a foul traitor's front :
Seem timid, but be brave : affect misgiving,
But have within thee steady confidence,
For we must show ourselves. Mark, if they cry
" Wait till we come to you," we will stand still,
And not ascend to them ; but if they say
" Come up to us," we will go up to them,
For God will have consigned them to our hands.

*(They commence climbing towards Michmash ; and its garrison,
observing them, are hailed by JONATHAN.)*

JONATHAN.

What, ho !

A SENTINEL.

Who are you ?

JONATHAN.

Hebrews.

THE PHILISTINES (*laughing*).

Ha, ha, ha !

SENTINEL.

Crept from your holes !

ONE OF THE GARRISON.

Come up to us and we will show you something.

JONATHAN (*to his ARMOR-BEARER*).

Follow me ; they are ours.

(JONATHAN and his ARMOR-BEARER, *climbing on their hands and feet, disappear. Presently clashing of swords heard from the fortress, and great uproar, mingled with a rumbling noise, as of an earthquake. The scene changes to the Gibeon side of the ravine. The tumult and noise as of an earthquake still heard.*)

A HEBREW SENTINEL (*gazing across the ravine*).

What sound do I hear, as if the earth on sudden
Roared like the ocean, and the clang of arms
Coming from Michmash ? and, most singular,
Behold the whole Philistine garrison
Come tumbling like a torrent on the field.
What meaneth this ? Arms glance along like light-
nings ;
Helmets and shields, and heads and bodies bare,
Dance in confusion. 'T is a fearful fray !
See how they charge each other, and, in rage,
Sweep slaughtering like a whirlpool round and round ;
And ever and anon some gashed head sinks,
Drowned in the bloody eddy. Louder grows
The noise ; earth trembles till the deep-jarred ground
Rumbles, as if 't were one enormous grave,
Wherein some overwhelmed, awakened corpse,
Resurgent, groaned in horror. Horror reigns ;

The darkened world at its expiry seems,
And the death-rattle in the earth's pent throat
Mingles with battle's burden. Can it be,
At this great note of nature, our oppressors
Deem we have come upon them as at Geba?
No; 't is themselves who thus themselves assail;
And, like a lion that has leaped the fold,
And ravens on the flock with flaming eyes,
Strange madness, making mutual massacre,
Sends through the gloom the play of glittering steel.
The steel is fiercelier plied: they wield their blades,
As laboring smiths upon the anvil wield
The time-observing hammers, and like them
Beat out harsh rhythms with augmenting rage.
The battle more embroils, arms louder ring:
Why stay I here, and not inform the King? [Exit.

SCENE III.

Mignon, in the farthest part of Gibeah. SAUL, seated under a pomegranate-tree, and with his troops around him. The sound of the earthquake heard, and that of the fighting faintly.

SAUL.

Number our band, and see who is absent. Quick;
I hear the sound of action, and severe.

(Enter the HEBREW SENTINEL, running.)

SENTINEL.

The King, the King! where is my lord the King!
Your Majesty, our foes are fiercely fighting;
With whom I know not. Over all the field

The tumult spreads like fire among the stubble.
The earth, too, seems to shake ; and I believe
I hear a noise that is not made by man,
So strange it is and dismal.

ANOTHER SENTINEL (*running in*).

Rise, my liege :
Up, up ! our foes are stirring ; arms on armor
Ring, and strange thunder mutters o'er the ground,
Which either God or man is causing tremble.

AN OFFICER (*to SAUL*).

The Prince is absent, and his armor-bearer.

SAUL (*to AHIAH the Priest*).

Bring here the Ark of God.

(*The Ark is brought, and AHIAH the Priest having laid his hand upon it, SAUL and he converse together, during which the noise increases.*)

SAUL (*to the Priest*).

Withdraw thine hand.

AHIAH.

The Lord hath not yet spoken.

SAUL.

He calls us by the earthquake to the fray.
To succor Jonathan let all away.

[*Exeunt omnes in haste.*]

SCENE IV.

The country between Michmash and Mount Ephraim. Enter wildly, and from different directions, a number of HEBREWS of that part. The noise of the pursuit heard.

FIRST HEBREW.

Behold! see yonder glorious sight! O joy!
Joy! the Philistines flee. Our countrymen,
Prisoners whom they had taken in their forays,
And who at Michmash did their drudgery,
Have turned upon the cruel garrison,
That, with those ghostly groanings of the ground,
And morn's lugubrious shadows fear befooled,
Were suddenly assailed by Jonathan,
Who yonder, nimble as the mountain roe,
With his huge armor-bearer sweeps along,
And cuts off every knave that hails from Gath.

SECOND HEBREW.

Joy, joy it is, indeed: our valor now,
Red as the morn, can mock poor Gilgal's pallor.

THIRD HEBREW.

O, this is eye-salve; this would cure the blind!
See where along the vale go Saul and Abner,
Mowing the foe down like two mighty scythes;
Naught leaving unto those who follow them,
Except to stumble o'er the swaths of dead.

FOURTH HEBREW.

They be the reapers, we the gleaners; follow:
Stones, if not steel, shall greet them in yon hollow.

[Exeunt omnes; and scene changes to Mount Ephraim.

*The noise of the pursuit continues, and enter a
HEBREW, shouting.*

Come forth from out your hiding, for the land
Is covered with the fugitive Philistines.
Give the alarm ; loud be the trumpet blown ;
Revenge ! revenge ! let's swoop upon them down.

*[A trumpet sounds, and exeunt the HEBREW, and those
who have come from their hiding-places ; and the
scene now changes to a wood near Beth-aven. Enter
several HEBREWS, tired and panting.]*

A HEBREW.

Let the Philistines live (those yet alive),
For to destroy them strength and breath are gone :
Weary are all, but still the king cries " On ! "

*(Enter SAUL, AHIAH, and a crowd of soldiers and people, also
exhausted and panting.)*

SAUL.

Let none eat food till evening, that revenge
May glut itself, and the ethereal maw
Of the starved soul be gorged ere bodily need
Be served. — Let this be known, and death the doom
Of him who disregards it.

*[Exeunt ; and presently enter ABNER and a HEBREW
OFFICER.]*

ABNER.

O, I am faint ; and there is honey lying
Upon the ground, and dropping from the tree,
Cool to allay both thirst and hunger.

OFFICER.

Taste

It not : the King refreshment hath forbidden
Under the heavy penalty of death,
Till evening falls, and with it his last enemy.
I die myself of toil, but let us on.

ABNER.

Nay, I must rest awhile : I can no longer
Pursue nor kill : wherefore should I, too, die
Of very ardor, and o'ertake i' the grave
The souls whom I have thither sent to-day ?
Why should I yield them orgies for to-night,
To see me come, who struck them from the light ?
I'll rest, although I eat not.

OFFICER.

No, away :

See how the foe is wasted, like the day ! —
Onward, and heed not your hot, throbbing veins :
We'll eat when eve comes, and no foe remains.
Hark ! I hear footsteps coming through the wood :
With me away ; nor rest you shall, nor food.

*[Exeunt, and enter JONATHAN, who dips a reed which he
has in his hand into the honey, and while he is eat-
ing enter soldiers.]*

FIRST SOLDIER.

O cease, your Highness, to partake of death !
The King hath strictly charged us not to eat
Till evening, and has cursed whoe'er should do so.

JONATHAN.

And wherefore ?

FIRST SOLDIER.

That we might not intermit
The labor of this slaughter.

JONATHAN.

(Aside.) I am doomed !

For it is done.

SECOND SOLDIER.

O, had we only seen
Your Highness sooner !

JONATHAN.

Would you had ! Away :
My sire hath trouble made for many ; and thwarted,
By this stern ordinance, his own design
Of full destruction ! See how I'm refreshed
By tasting but a little of this honey :
How much, then, greater, could we have eaten freely,
Would the ruin of the enemy have been !
Say not that you have this misfortune seen.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VI.

A wooded part near Aijalon. Time, evening. SAUL, JONATHAN,
ABNER, AHIAH, OFFICERS, SOLDIERS, and PEOPLE.

SAUL (*having cast himself reclining against a bank*).
Now for a little rest ; for though my spirit
Is fresh, my body has no longer vigor.
Bring me a drink.

(*A SOLDIER presents to him a cup of wine.*)

No, give me water : I, to-day, have poured
Out wine sufficient in the blood of foes.

(*Water is brought, and he drinks.*)

Sweeter, methinks, that draught is unto me,
Than ever was the warm, spiced juice of grape.
How little glads us when we truly need !
Sit, friends, for we are equals all to-day.
Now bring some food, and let those eat who may.

SAUL.

79

ABNER.

I cannot eat, and yet I 'm hungry too.

FIRST OFFICER.

Nor I.

SECOND OFFICER.

Nor I.

SAUL.

Pray you, do not forego
Some needful nourishment. Regard not mine
Example. Freely eat, and hoard up strength
To re-pursue the enemy, before
The young moon has gone down.

AHIAH.

Low in the west,
Even now she is, and from her lighted censer
Gives but a weak, though sacred beam : same time,
The fragrance born of yon adjacent wood,
Along the dewy air diffusing incense,
Both low attending moon and breath of balm,
Seem ministers at this great sacrifice
And wonderful oblation of our foes,
Who, by miraculous power, this day have been
Discomfited and wasted.

SAUL.

Jonathan,
Why silent thou ? Take food, and be revived
While light remains for labor. See, the clouds
Clear off, and leave the expanse o' the sky serene,
Although obscure.

FIRST OFFICER.

This is the most romantic
Of all time's hours !

SECOND OFFICER.

Witchcraft now seems to hang
 Between the horns o' the moon, whose low light falls
 To fill the darksome chamber of the night,
 That now appears, to my imagination,
 Upgiven to magic and the spells profane
 Of sorcerers, and hags whose bodies bend
 Crone-crook'd as yon moon, from evil years
 Spect nightly gazing, in the gloomy glass
 Of potent caldrons, for the summoned face
 Of their familiar demon. Art thou not,
 O Saul, afraid of the magicians' charms,
 Directed 'gainst thee for their rooting out ?

SAUL.

I fear them not, nor anything that comes
 Within the range of their claimed ministry ;
 Whether ghosts of the departed, or bad angels
 Who (it is affirmed) are sold into their service
 For the price of their own souls : yea, if the Devil
 Now stood alone by me on this dusk field,
 I 'd snub him with ill manners. Yet the moon
 Wears unto me the same weird aspect as
 She wears to thee : and when I was a boy,
 I was (as even to this hour I am)
 Enchanted by the horror of this quarter ;
 Loving it more than when, her face expanding,
 The dim equivocation wears away,
 Until at full she languishes i' th' sky,
 And shines down like an angel.

FIRST OFFICER.

Spectre-like,
 And with a few spectator stars, she goes

Down westward, as if leading the obsequies
Of those of her idolatrous worshippers,
Who, by their own swords or by ours, have perished
Since broke this day's strange morning.

SAUL.

Hearken how

The mournful, mocking, deep resurgent blast
Sighs through yon cypresses' tops the dismal dirge
Of the remainder ; whom their own cusped goddess,
Pale Ashtaroth, shall from heaven's verge see scud,
Like phantoms fleeting o'er the shadowy ground ;
For soon we will re-urge the invader's flight,
Nor leave one breathing by the morning light.

(Enter a LEVITE.)

LEVITE.

Your Majesty, the ravening multitude
Eat from the cattle's quivering carcasses,
Which they in haste have slaughtered on the field,
And but half drained of blood ; offending heaven.

SAUL.

This must not : hither roll a broad-based stone,
And let each man whate'er he has to kill
Bring here, and duly dress it in our sight.
Disperse yourselves awhile among the people,
And all send here who 've aught to kill for food.

[Exit the LEVITE.]

(Aside.) Now my first altar to the Lord I'll build,
And him at once propitiate, that so
He may continue this prosperity,
That, like a copious, unexpected shower
After long drought, makes green my heart, long sere,
And withering 'neath misgivings. Abiah, choose
From out the herd the fairest sacrifice. *[Exit ABIAH.]*

ABNER.

So be it gladly done, wise king and cousin.
 Let not the God of Battles be forgot,
 Lest he aga' forget ourselves. 'Tis meet
 We did acknowledge this deliverance,
 Heaven-wrought ; and ere we gratulate the Prince,
 Chief warrior in this wondrous feat of arms,
 Upsend the smoke of offering to the skies.

(A rude altar is quickly built, and, AHIAH having sacrificed thereon,)

SAUL (*aside*).

Now, with a conscience cleared, and 'suaged the fears
 That ruffled the fair down of my existence,
 Erelong let me resume the grateful toil
 Of war defensive, all whose aim is peace.

(Turning to those before him.)

Friends, ere the moon, gone down, shall us no longer
 Enable to distinguish friend from foe,
 We will rebend ourselves to the pursuit :
 The rallied (if any rally) we'll o'ertake,
 And leave no sullying dreg of the invaders
 Alive upon our soil at peep of morn.

(Acclamation, amidst which enters AHIAH.)

AHIAH.

Let us consult Jehovah ; all draw near.

SAUL.

Ask may I repursue them ; and, if so,
 Shall I be able to destroy their remnant.

(Whilst AHIAH seeks an answer from God, enter two of ZAPH'S DEMONS, meeting.)

FIRST DEMON.

Ah, my gossip, art thou here?

SECOND DEMON.

Ah, old crony, pray what cheer?

FIRST DEMON.

Moderate.

SECOND DEMON.

They say that's best.

FIRST DEMON.

Prithee, grant me my request.

Tell me, tell me, tell me, pray, —

Thinkest thou the Lord will say

Whether Saul shall further slay?

SECOND DEMON.

Pshaw! I've no vaticination. —

To us what's Saul and his probation?

FIRST DEMON.

Thou'rt a critic.

SECOND DEMON.

Am I?

FIRST DEMON.

Yes.

SECOND DEMON.

Critics are nor more nor less

Than arrant fools.

FIRST DEMON.

Thou seem'st in dudgeon.

SECOND DEMON.

I'm as I seem: come, let us trudge on.

FIRST DEMON.

Whither goest thou ?

SECOND DEMON.

To Mount Tabor,
To rest me from my morning's labor.

FIRST DEMON.

Labor! sport: for we'd much mirth
This morning, churning up the earth.

SECOND DEMON.

Had you? Then you do not rue it. —
'T was tyranny to make us do it.
Mirth, indeed!

FIRST DEMON.

Who made that moaning?

SECOND DEMON.

'T was I that played the part of groaning;
And with a will too, in the key due,
A natural sorrow from me toning. —
Let's away.

FIRST DEMON.

I'll see the end on't.

SECOND DEMON.

But so so, thou mayest depend on't.

FIRST DEMON.

"But so so!" I see not why.

SECOND DEMON.

Look again, and tell me then:
For already I can spy

Rising trouble,
Like a bubble,
Brewing in the priest's dark eye.
If my ken
Be not dimmer grown towards men,
Soon will he to Saul reply.

AHIAH.

God doth not answer thee.

SAUL.

And wherefore?

AHIAH.

Know not, but he is silent.

I

SAUL.

What the wrong,

And who is the wrong-doer? as God lives,
Although it were mine own son Jonathan,
He for his yet unknown misdeed should die.

(SAUL pauses, and none answer him.)

Now every one of you to one side gather,
And I and Jonathan will take the other;
Then let the lot be cast, which God dispose.

(The people having retired to one hand, and the King and Jonathan to the other, AHIAH draws the lot, and the KING and JONATHAN are taken, the people escaping.)

(Aside.) How is 't that evil must thus dog my steps!

(Aloud.) Come, cast the lot between my son and me.

(JONATHAN is taken.)

(Aside.) Now God assist me to endure my portion!

(Aloud.) Jonathan, speak, and say what thou hast done?

JONATHAN.

Alas ! this only have I done. I took
A little honey with a rod I bore ;
And for this simple deed, then, I must die.

SAUL.

O that my curse should fall upon myself !
Saul, Saul, rash man, now let the sceptre drop
Sheer from thy hands, for thou hast slain its heir.
O Jonathan, my dear son Jonathan,
Alas, alas for thee, for thou must die !

ONE OF THE CROWD.

O hideous wrong ! what wouldst thou do, O King ?
Thy son too, — God forbid ! Shall he die, he, —
He who began this victory ? As God lives
Thou shalt not hurt a hair of him, for he
Hath worked with heaven to-day.

*(A great uproar, amidst which the people rescue JONATHAN,
and bear him away.)*

SAUL.

They break my oath,
Not I. O Jonathan, thou 'rt saved ; but I
Had near destroyed thee ! Foolishly I swore,
Forbidding to eat ; — but who can see the end
Of many a fine beginning ? My command
Has acted as the goad acts on the ass,
For it has brought us sudden to a halt, —
Stopped the pursuit's swift arrow. Abner, see
Our sentries posted : speak not to me now.

[Exit ABNER.]

Surely there is a blight within the ear
Denying me a harvest. Jonathan
May reap when I am dead ; but I shall never

Garner within my bosom sheaves of peace.
Heaven hath a quarrel with me ; Heaven
Surely denies perfection to my deeds.
Ye fast-appearing and sky-peopling stars,
Ye see me, in victory, mournful. I'll seek rest,
And ye, whilst o'er my head you vigils keep,
Kindle dreams of home and Ahinoam in my sleep.

[Exit

SECOND DEMON.

Let us, too, go.

FIRST DEMON.

But not to dream.

SECOND DEMON.

Why, spirit, no, — though well 't might seem,
We dream while waking, wake while dream,
Or one eternal vigil keep : —
How can the soul, surceasing, sleep ?

FIRST DEMON.

'T is even so. — Where shall we go ?
To Tabor, or to Mount Nebo,
Or to the never-slumbering deep ?
Oft on its margin brown I love
Sit brooding like a sable dove ;
As sable dove, sit out at sea,
Full oft by night it pleaseth me ;
And now, upon its earthy brim,
To sit were pleasant, in the dim ;
There, rapt, to muse on prophecies,
Or read the volume of the skies.

SECOND DEMON.

Ha, ha !

FIRST DEMON.

Or, what were better yet,
Away to wing where winds low fret
Soft music from Genesaret;
Or sit where, ever bald, abides
Gray Carmel, listening to the tides;
Or rest on hoary Hermon high,
Stood shining, shield-like, in the sky;
Else swift to grander, gloomier one,
The solemn, cedared Lebanon,—
There, Sardon, dear, let us be gone.

SECOND DEMON.

No more, no more of this: Good by:
To none of these I choose career,
But, spurning planetary sphere,
Go cool my choler in the sky:
And haply, all night hovering near,
May watch the spot where Saul doth lie.

[Exeunt different ways.]





ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Gilead. An apartment in SAUL's palace. Enter ZAPH.

ZAPH.

The insult that proud Gloriel on me put
In the affair at Michmash rankles in me.
Some wrongs there are which never can be pardoned.
Moreo'er revenge is pleasant ; Satan never
Forgives ; neither will Zaph in this case do so.
I Gloriel hate, first on the general score
Of our antagonistic offices,
Then on the especial of his last oppression :
And now I know what I will do. Towards Saul
I bear no malice, neither is there out
Against him Satan's warrant, since he's scarcely
Jehovah's minion. But I will bait him ;
One of my troop I'll set upon his soul,
On purpose to spite Gloriel — Softly, lo !
Here comes his guardian angel to expel me.

*[Exit in haste, and ZOE crosses the apartment after him ;
then enter TWO OFFICERS of the royal household.]*

FIRST OFFICER.

Now, surely, we shall have a lasting peace ;
For since the King arose from his prostration,

After the base desertion borne at Gilgal,
He has dealt round him such a storm of battles,
That all the enemies of our race are down,
And buried 'neath his heap of victories.

SECOND OFFICER.

Discourse of Satan and he will appear ;
Though that 's a saw ungracious towards the king,
Who can be very gracious when he wills.
He 's coming here to walk and talk alone,
And never 's in company more to his mind
Than his own thoughts in words half muttered. Hence :
Our staying might give unto him offence.

[Exeunt OFFICERS and enter SAUL.]

SAUL.

All have succumbed before me ; — Moab, Ammon,
Edom ;
The Kings of Zobah, and the fierce Philistines ;
Nor have the Amalekites unhumbled gone :
None now dare spoil us, and my throne seems settled,
That Samuel said was given to another. —
Surely it was the peevishness of dotage
That to such outbreak prompted the old man. —
Ah, even while I speak of him, behold,
All venerable in his silver hairs
And pomp of years, he comes ! — and not for naught.
What is the burden that he will deliver ?

(Enter SAMUEL.)

What wouldst thou, Samuel ?

SAMUEL.

Listen unto me.
Jehovah caused me to anoint thee King

Over his people Israel ; so now
Hearken unto his voice. Jehovah saith,
Go and smite Amalek ; for I remember
How he laid wait for Israel in the desert,
As he came up from Egypt. Cut thou off
Man, woman, youth, maid, child, and infant, all ;
Camel, ox, ass, and sheep ; spare naught whatever.

SAUL.

Exterminate them ?

SAMUEL .

Utterly destroy them.

SAUL.

Women and babes, and those by years made help-
less ?—

Dearly indeed now will the children pay
For what their sires did in a long-past day.

SAMUEL.

Moses hath told us that the parents' sin
Upon the children should be visited :
And what are days to the Eternal ? Go. —
Why dost thou question, — to obey seem slow ?

[Exit.]

SAUL.

Samuel, thou'rt too imperious, or I'm
Too proud and unforgiving. — No adieu
He deigned me, nor, with hands imposed,
Left me his blessing ; — but I can forego it,
And could with ease have now foregone his presence.
'T is strange, this visit ; it is very strange.
Why comes he unto me with God's commission
If I'm of God dismissed ? This looks dishonest ;
This silently yet surely contradicts



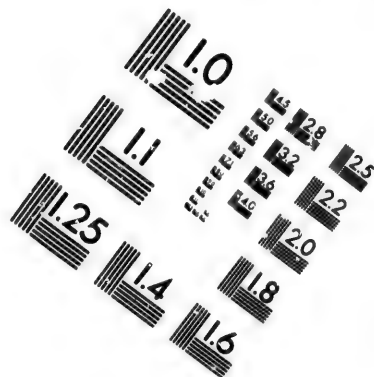
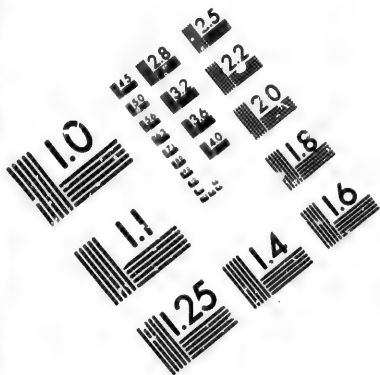
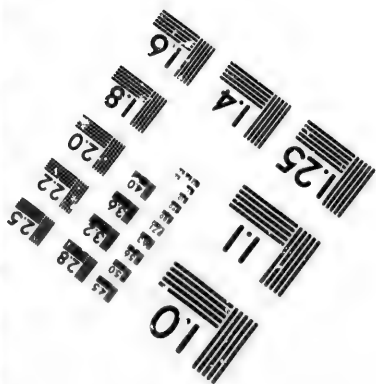
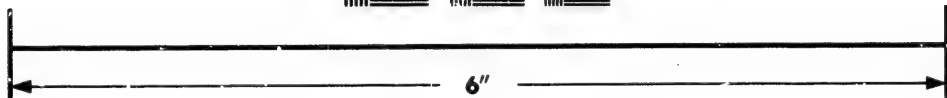
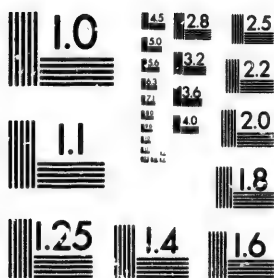


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His declaration of my forfeiture
Of Israel's sceptre, that which often seems
A prophecy still hanging o'er me dire,
One day to be fulfilled. I'll think no more
Of that! Why was I shaken with words, when deeds
Have not the power to move me?— Samuel, Samuel,
Either the Lord spoke not by thee at Gilgal
Or speaks not by thee now. I have heard tell
Of hoary men being perjured; of false prophets;
Of lying spirits sent them from the Lord.
None are beyond the compass of temptation. —
Haply the seer and others have conspired
For my dethronement; or they seek my life,
That they may gain possession of my crown:
Hence with this mandate Samuel comes to me
(Whom he has found too unobsequious),
Thinking that Death shall meet me on the field
Of this grim expedition. No, 't is wild,
And impious to think of! Yet wild things
And impious have happened. Ah, if there,
Indeed, be somewhere an ambitious wight
Now coveting my throne, let him beware;
For if mine eye should light on him, and know him,
I will not say the horror of his doom;
But it should be appalling. 'T is the mood;
This is the very pitch of Heaven's harsh rhythm.
Though Gilgal feigned, herein I feel Heaven speaks
To me by Samuel. Mercy, hence, and, Sword,
Come forth, and do the bidding of the Lord. [Exit

SCENE II.

*Before a beleaguered city of the Amalekites. SAUL, ABNER,
HEBREW SOLDIERS, and KENITES, — the last bewailing.*

SAUL (*addressing the KENITES*).

Weep not for the destruction of your goods,
But haste, depart from 'mong the Amalekites,
Lest I destroy you and your households with them.

KENITES.

Alas! alas!

SAUL.

Wring not your hands, but go.
Your fathers once to ours assistance rendered,
Hence towards you this good-will; escape at once;
Quick, get you gone, or ere it be too late. —

[*Exeunt KENITES.*]

Saidst thou the city was surrounded, Abner?

ABNER.

I did.

SAUL.

On every hand?

ABNER.

At every point.

SAUL.

We will surprise it, then. Do thou lead on
Those who assault the rearward of the place,
Whilst I assail its front. When we shall meet
'T will be midway in a domain of death;
Shaking hands across a bank of bloody corpses.

Drive pity from thy breast ; no quarter give,
For to destruction are devoted all.

ABNER.

All ! O all unexampled rigor ! all !
Women and children, infants, hoary heads ?

SAUL.

Even just-born babes that have not drawn the breast
Must die ; and those that have not seen the light,
Within expectant mothers killed by fright.
There must no seed be left to raise new harvest.
Pity hear not though strongly it plead in thee.
Drown them in their own blood ; pound them together,
And trample out the living fire of Amalek.
There, I have finished ordinance as dire
As ever mortal gave. 'T is Heaven requires
This rigorous execution at my hand,
Or I could not have given such fell command.

ABNER.

O, let us cover us with the cowl of night
When we perform it. Yet of slight avail
Were darkness ; for at whatsoever hour ,
We paint this picture, its pervading crimson
Will set the heavens on fire. O Saul ! O Saul !
What go we do ? I dreamed not that our mission
Urged us so far into the realm of vengeance.

SAUL.

Go, now begin ; — go, ere I cry out, " Spare ! "
Go, and believe it to be but man slaughter
When women's and children's blood is shed like water.

[Exit ABNER.]

Now let me tighten every cruel sinew,
And gird the whole up in unfeeling hardness ;

That my swollen heart, which bleeds within me tears,
May choke itself to stillness. I am as
A shivering bather that upon the shore,
Looking and shrinking at the cold black waves,
Quick, starting from his revery, with a rush
Annihilates his horror. Now to the deed.
Hebrews, come on ; glut your dislike of old,
And curst be he who spares for love or gold.

[*Exeunt SAUL and SOLDIERS.*]

SCENE III.

The midst of the town. Noise of the massacre ; the which having subsided, enter SAUL and SOLDIERS from one hand, and ABNER and SOLDIERS from the other, meeting.

SAUL.

Art thou with blood not blinded ?

ABNER.

Thou look'st grimmer
Than ever I beheld thee ; even when Nahash
Thou huntedst down from morning until noon.
And dyed his flight-path red.

SAUL.

No more ; 't is done.

ABNER.

Would it were not ! I hated the Amalekites ;
But such a deed —

SAUL.

It is not thine, nor mine.

SAUL.

ABNER.

Thou knowest if this had not been of God,
I'd disobeyed thee.

SAUL.

I had not commanded
Without Heaven's sanction. Samuel stands alone
Herein responsible. Let us cut short
Our colloquy. Leave some to bury the dead,
Lest pestilence fill the air. — Cease grieving, man :
The agony is passed ; the slain are easier
Now than the slayers : it is we want pity.
No one now suffers from thy trenchant blade.
The lambs which thou hast killed and wrapped in gore
Sleep painless, and will wake to pain no more.

ABNER.

Who will not call me butcher !

SAUL.

What is done
Is done ; and have not I in this red pool
Waded as deep as thou ? Be comforted :
Remember, when our fathers Canaan took
All to the sword were put : this is not new.

ABNER.

There's some relief in that.

SAUL.

Much, all-sufficient.
Consider, too, men move not much our pity :
Men are our counterparts, and these were all
Hereditary enemies of ours.

ABNER.

But women ! the resemblance of our mothers,
And of our sisters, as methought they seemed,
When, with their upraised hands and frantic looks,
They fled before us ; or, without defenders,
In fathers, husbands, brothers, all cut off,
Stayed kneeling and bowed down their meek white
 necks

Before us to receive the scymetar.

SAUL.

I prithee peace ; Abner, I prithee peace.

ABNER.

I often in my rage thought on my daughter. —
And, oh ! to see the little ones, that those
Damned brutes carved up so cheerfully, or dashed
Against the stones their brains out.

SAUL.

Prithee peace.

ABNER.

I cannot hold.

SAUL.

Ah, I could rave, too, Abner.

But that I dare not let my thoughts have birth,
Much less array those embryo thoughts in words,
I should deliver me of such conception
As would appall the reverent ear of men,
And make me seem, even what I fear I am,
The Omnipotent's accuser. But let's cease,
And keep stern silence from this very day
Touching this dreadful business : let our hearts
(Like smoky rooms) blacken with their pent-up grief,
But never let us willingly recall it.

SAUL.

ABNER.

'T will come without recall! As breaks the day
Unto the wretch who has that day to die,
So will it come to me unwelcome.

SAUL.

Let

It come; and bid it back unto the deep,
To perish there amidst the gathering gloom
Of ever-falling shadows. This is grim;
But time dulls deeds as it doth torches dim.
Persist not, cousin, with this torch-like passion.
Waved midst imagination's darksome field,
To conjure glimpses of upbraiding ghosts,
To people and perforce perplex thy soul. —
What's Amalek to thee? And how canst thou
Be foul, though dashed with bloodiest aspersion,
When laving duty from offence doth leave
Thy spirit pure as scented garments clean?

ABNER.

O that these hands were clean!

SAUL.

Be foul the hand,

If but the heart be fair! 'T is not the deed,
But 't is the motive that induced the deed,
That gives the soul complexion. Bid remorse
Find out its proper prey.

ABNER.

I will.

SAUL.

Upbraid

Thyself no longer.

ABNER.

I am dumb ;— ah, could

I so remain! I cannot on this theme
Be speechless ; but whatever tint may wear
My other deeds, past or to come, I'll say,
Or bloody red, or be I ingrained black,
Herein I'm white as childhood's innocence.

SAUL.

May Heaven hold both guiltless! Let us go;
The men are wondering at our parley. Come,
We've but begun ; we must the race uproot:
Betake we to the horrible pursuit.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

SCENE IV.

*Country near Shur. An Amalekitish town seen in a state of
ruin. Enter two HEBREW SOLDIERS.*

FIRST SOLDIER.

Let us put up our blades ; for not a blade
Seems standing on the Amalekites' wide mead,
So ruthless have we mown down life thereon,
And, with the sudden sickle of our coming,
Reaped red, prodigious harvest of old hate.

SECOND SOLDIER.

From Havilah to Shur we have destroyed them.
By the reward that waits on deeds well done
Will not Jehovah now upon us smile!

FIRST SOLDIER.

Doubtless he will. 'T is pleasant, too, to feed
Thus the keen appetite of a gnawing grudge,

(Whilst we perform the mandate of Jehovah,
And work with his commission. 'T is as though
We banqueted on meats, that, while they gave
The present palate exquisite delight,
We knew should furnish us with surplus strength
To last for many days; or 't is as though
We feasted with soft music floating round us.
When I was killing, such thoughts came to me, like
The sound of cleft-dropped waters to the ear
Of the hot mower, who stops thereat the oftener
To whet his glittering scythe, and, while he smiles,
With the harsh, sharpening hone, beats their fall's time,
And, dancing to it in his heart's strait chamber,
Forgets that he is weary.

SECOND SOLDIER.

Even so

During this wild destruction I have found it.
To me, along the slaughter's lengthened roar,
It seemed as though some pliant, deep, bass voice
Made — whether the note was from babes' voices shrill,
Or frantic women's, or oaths or howls of men —
Harmony to each occasion.

FIRST SOLDIER.

None are spared.

(Enter two other SOLDIERS.)

THIRD SOLDIER.

Yes; Saul hath spared their King.

FOURTH SOLDIER.

And we have spared
The choicest of their cattle and their sheep,
As sacrifice to Heaven.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Is their King,
Too, spared to be a sacrifice to Heaven?

SECOND SOLDIER.

Why hath Saul spared their King?

THIRD SOLDIER.

Perhaps to be
A mockery for Gibeah's gaping rabble.

FOURTH SOLDIER.

Dost thou not know that like affects its like?
The king has spared the king.

SECOND SOLDIER.

But we have not
The subjects spared, who are our like. Besides,
We were to finish them: I have obeyed
Unto my uttermost.

THIRD SOLDIER.

So I.

FOURTH SOLDIER.

And I,
Little thanks. It is not in man's nature, more
Than it is in the beast's full, panting heart,
To spare his quarry when he's roused by hunting it.
There goes our king. How conqueror-like he stalks!—
And yet methinks that he is sorrowful.

THIRD SOLDIER.

I could be sad too, but I shall not. Pshaw!
Why should the sword grieve? Let the wielder.
Have but obeyed the King.

FOURTH SOLDIER.

Let's follow him.

'T is said we back by Carmel.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Then let's sing.

[*Exeunt, singing.*]

By Carmel, by Carmel,
We travel back from war will : —
Old Carmel, old Carmel,
Behind us slaughter, before us water
We'll see from ancient Carmel.

SCENE V

Ramah ; an apartment in the house of Samuel. An ANGEL descends.

ANGEL.

Saul's early piety having wasted quite,
Jehovah rues that he hath made him king ;
To thus inform the prophet, from heaven's height
I come commanded from light's lofty spring :
So Samuel, when fair day's last beams take flight,
To learn God's will must droop beneath the light,
Descending on him from my hovering wing.
Here 't is he sleeps, and here by daily prayer
Labors for Israel : here upon the law
By day he ponders, and when shadows draw
Around him, lying on his silent couch,
Shall see me through the starry air approach ;
For I to-night access must to him find,
And stamp on his, Jehovah's altered mind.
[ANGEL *disappears.*]

SCENE VI.

Near Gilgal. Time, morning. The army of Saul seen marching home. Enter SAUL.

SAUL.

The morn opes wildly, — 't will be rain to-day.
I never marched so heavily, although
The gladsome rank and file dance on before me.

(Enter QUEEN.)

My Ahinoam! what is it brings thee hither?

QUEEN.

Ask of the swallow what 't is brings him to us,
And he will tell thee 't is the approach of summer:
So thine approach has drawn me to thee hither.

SAUL.

Am I thy summer, my Gibeon Queen?
But thou art not the swallow, Ahinoam; —
For, now I think on 't, 't is not happily chosen
Thy simile of that wanderer, — since he leaves us
At peep of wintry weather: and, remember,
The swallow is a byword grown in Israel,
Since when my army fled, like birds of passage,
At Gilgal's sudden chill.

QUEEN.

Forget that now.

SAUL.

I read thine eye. The Amalekites have perished;
None saved save he who merited the sword,

Haply, beyond the others who were doomed
To feel its keen destruction, — even their king.

QUEEN.

Have all his wives, too, perished, and his children?

SAUL.

All from his loins (for no one thought of mercy):
And all of womankind who called him husband
Had been cut off ere he was taken.

QUEEN.

Then,

Let him die too. If he be man, he will
Not live, but will request thee yet to end him.

SAUL.

I half repent me that I did not do it.

QUEEN.

Couldst cast him back into his harried realm,
As might some fisher from his bursting net
Throw back a scaly monster to its flood: —
But no: why do I fondly talk? — he can
No more return to that which is no more;
Nor can he live, if he indeed be man,
Still in his conqueror and destroyer's power,
More than leviathan could live ashore.
Poor wretch forlorn! Is nothing left him? naught?

SAUL.

Nothing of his was spared, except a few
Choice sheep and cattle. These the people saved,
And have brought hither to be sacrificed. —
Some to the Lord were sacrificed at Carmel.

SAUL.

105

QUEEN.

Saul, thou art made a minister of vengeance,
And must perform thine office ; but may God
Forgive my weeping o'er thy finished mission !

SAUL.

My morning star, let me wipe off these dews
That dim thee in this unexpected rising.
Ahinoam, far dearer than that star
Is to the hour of dawn, art thou to me
Now, when home coming, gloomy though successful
Lift up thine eyes upon me, love, and drive
From out me my black darkness.

QUEEN.

Husband dear,
Haste home with me to Gibeah, where new sights
May cause forgetfulness of what is past.

SAUL.

I never can forget the dreadful past : —
Oh, I could paint thee pictures with my tongue
(Scenes drawn from out of Amalek's great anguish)
From morn till midnight, till thine eyes grew redder
Than blood itself with weeping. Forget them ! no :
Such scenes resemble not the forms that children
Sketch on the stones, and that the rain outwashes.
Ahinoam, I'm a soldier, and have seen
War many times ; but all here seemed like murder.
Such cries of youths, such shrieks, such looks of women ;
Such chorus of promiscuous sounds, imploring
Mercy from men, — nay, men let me not call them, —
Who met those melting sounds with hideous laughter,
And out of countenance grinned the encircling air,
That stagnant stood with horror.

QUEEN.

It was wrong
To scoff at the poor wretches in their ruin.

SAUL.

Their ruin was the revel of our men ;
Who made the massacre a carnival,
And fleshed their souls yet deeper than their swords.
Pshaw ! the broad multitude know naught of judgment.
With them, revenge was at the bottom of it ;
Whilst sensuality rose to the top like scum.
Revenge is hunger of the mind, and hunger
Makes all things cruel ; — yet the wolf not sports with,
But rends his victim, and his sharp head plunges
At once into its bowels. Oh, 't was foul
Behavior ! — but I fear that most of men,
If they were licensed by divine decree,
Would change to demons, and for aught be ready.

QUEEN.

Beware lest thou blaspheme Jehovah, Saul.
His holy will depraves not those who work it.

SAUL.

It does when they exceed it. The dead they've stoned,
And made the Holiest's order an excuse
To glut their basest passions. — But I'll punish :
They shall sneak in at Gibeah's back door ;
Pageant there shall be none ! I could not bear
To see thee smiling — and with thee all Gibeah —
On half those men.

QUEEN.

I see that they are flushed
Even yet, and look as lewd as savage.

SAUL.

Ay,

As Amalek's daughters, even i' the agony, found them.
Babe-killers are a third of them by nature ;
Nor e'er for Age felt reverence : oh ! — but I
Ne'er held that men were noble, for, in truth,
There is a latent treachery in us all ; —
Ay, and mayhap in woman ; though I think
That in your inmost essence you are gentle,
And prize no bravery in men save such
As hath been married to a tender spirit,
That, like an indwelling angel, causes them
To grieve even while they punish. Such not these.
Look at the gazing fellows who are nearest us :
Blood-shotten are their eyes with rage, and, where
The wine has not the cheek incarnadined,
The tawny jaundice mantles on the skin,
And speaks of yet-edged malice. I am sorry
That thou hast stolen from Gibeah to meet us ;
For, in their vain and ignorant conceit,
Thy coming here may seem to mean glad welcome.

QUEEN.

'T was love for you that did impel me hither.

SAUL.

I know it ; but, sweet chuck, return at once :
Go back, dear wife, and wait me still in Gibeah.

QUEEN.

And must I be discharged so soon ? and when
You're moody too, — for I can see you're troubled.

SAUL.

Not much, love, now : so let us separate ;
On thee attending, I could not compel
This force to march 'tween discipline's strait borders.

QUEEN.

I see 't was foolish to forestall your coming,
And disallow your soldiers' natural frenzy
To ebb yet lower down the bank of time
Before their greeting ; but I 'll say farewell :
To-morrow you will rest in Gibeah.

SAUL.

I hope so, darling ; and by that time, surely,
These men will don their old and lying faces,
And from their mistresses and wives conceal
The dark truths of their nature. Now, farewell,
And better fare for love that brought thee hither.

[Exit QUEEN.]

'T is well that she is gone ! for, staying here,
She might, indeed, see trouble. Even now,
I have, afflicting me, a black misgiving
That I have hurt myself in sparing Agag.
Would that I had despatched him with the rest !
Nor braved rebuke from yon approaching Prophet,
Who comes upon me with o'erwhelming eyes,
And brows that seem as laden down with doom.

(Enter SAMUEL.)

Mayest thou be blessed of the Lord, O Samuel !
Lo, his command given by thee is performed.

SAMUEL.

What meaneth, then, this bleating of the sheep
And lowing of the oxen that I hear ?

SAUL.

109

SAUL.

The people have brought on the choicest cattle
And sheep, to sacrifice them to the Lord ;
All else destroyed they.

SAMUEL.

Miserable man,
Listen, and I will tell thee what the Lord
Said unto me last night.

SAUL.

Say on.

SAMUEL.

When thou
Wert humble and yet void of pride, God chose thee
To be his chief o'er Israel ; then why
Hast thou not been obedient since ? and when
He sent thee to destroy the Amalekites,
Why hast thou not obeyed him, but allowed
Thyself to make exceptions, and take spoil ?

SAUL.

I have obeyed him ; I have executed
The Lord's behest. The Amalekitish King
I have brought captive ; and have all his subjects,
Man, woman, youth, and babe, put to the sword.
Their cattle, dead or dying, strew the land ;
Except a few which should have been destroyed,
The choicest, which the people brought on hither,
As sacrifice unto the Lord thy God.

SAMUEL.

Hath God in sacrifice and in burnt-offerings
As great delight as in obedience given

To his command? Know that to obey is better
Than sacrifice; and that to hearken to him,
Is more acceptable than the fat of rams
Unto him offered: for rebellion
Is all as bad as is the sin of witchcraft;
And stubbornness is as injustice, or
Idolatry. Hence, since thou hast again
Rejected God's commandment, so he thee
Hath finally rejected from being king.

SAUL (*aside*).

How shall I answer? O Ahinoam!
Nell that thou left'st me when thou didst! It is
For thy sake and for Jonathan's I'll bend.
Down, heart; down to the dust, if 't so must be.
(*Aloud.*) I have done wrong; I have not perfectly
Performed my errand; for I have deferred
Unto the people, granting their request
To save some cattle. Pardon me, and now
Go back with me, that I may worship God.

SAMUEL.

I will not go with thee; for thou again
Rejected hast God's voice, and he doth thee
Reject from longer being Israel's king.

SAUL.

Thou shalt not leave me thus; stay, I command thee!

(SAMUEL *turns to go away*; SAUL *seizing him by the mantle,*
which rends in SAUL's grasp.)

SAMUEL.

Spirit perverse, and ready to do evil,
Thus hath God rent from thee this day the kingdom,

Saul rejected

And given it finally unto another,
Better than thou. Remember, the Strength of Israel
Lies not, nor will repent ; nor is he man
To change his mind.

SAUL.

I do confess my sin !

SAMUEL.

That comes too late to stay thee on the throne.

SAUL.

Too late ! Is there no pardon in the world ? —
Why, I myself dispense forgiveness, even
To culprits who have forfeited their lives.
Is not thy God as merciful as man ?

SAMUEL.

He mercy shows to thousands who do keep
His great commandments.

SAUL.

They who keep them need

No mercy. Say, what have I done that calls
For this huge penalty, now twice denounced ? —
Omitted what, that cannot yet be done ?
He has not said that which thou hast declared.
Thou art mine enemy, art jealous of me,
Wouldst wish to see me trip and tumble down.
Prophet, I now impeach thee. Why didst stay
Away from Gilgal, and, when I supplied
Thy lack, come thither and ban me for my pains ?
And wherefore com'st thou now in this proud style,
Requiting me for toil and life imperilled
By second deposition ? — and forsooth,

Because some sundry sheep and calves and beeves
Yet snuff the air, — of which there is abundance, —
And a poor realmless king still lives to weep ;
Or curse, in secret, thee, myself, and God, —
The obvious triad who (for an offence,
Not his, but his forefathers') have conspired
To dash him and his idols. Answer these
Sharp accusations ; then with thine own soul
Itself made pure arraign me.

SAMUEL.

God arraigns thee.

SAUL.

Nay ! — and yet take the cattle, and take Agag
And kill him out of kindness. I know thou lovest
Not kings ; so lovest not me, although I am
One half of thine own making : — hence it is
That I've endured thy schooling ; for I cannot
Forget the early days of our acquaintance,
Ere thou hadst learned to chide me.

SAMUEL.

I still love thee,
Even in this thy last and deep disaster.

SAUL.

Is this sincerely spoken ? — if it be
Give me some proof : my anger towards thee dies.
Say that Jehovah is not wroth.

SAMUEL.

How can I ?
For he hath cast thee off !

SAUL.

But not forever : —

Such cannot be for aught that I have done,
Or aught left undone. — Even if he has,
Still honor me before my people's eyes
By going with me now to worship him.

SAMUEL.

Lead on ; but never more a favor ask me.

*[Exeunt, and enters, soon, a SUBALTERN, who paces to
and fro ; and presently a confused noise arises.]*

SUBALTERN (*stopping suddenly.*)

What means that hubbub, loud, and yet subdued ? —
Here cometh one can scarce contain himself.

(Enter a SOLDIER.)

What now ? Thou look'st surprised.

SOLDIER.

No wonder, when

The gentle Samuel has executioner turned,
And finisher of our labor. Agag is
No more.

SUBALTERN.

Has judgment, then, been so exact
That it has not allowed one doit of mercy,
Though 't were to have been bestowed upon a king ?
This is not true : — and how of Samuel ? — pshaw !
I Agag saw but now, and he was living.

SOLDIER.

He lives no longer, — not at least 'mongst men.
Agag is now a ghost, and would not know
The carcass that three minutes since contained him.

So felled it is, so lopped, so strewn on the ground,
The bird, his soul, now would not know the tree
That it for forty years has sat and sung in.
He'll pipe no more.

SUBALTERN.

Did Samuel order his death?

SOLDIER.

He summoned the idolater, who came
Bareheaded, and yet delicately, forth;
Approaching him, and, with forced smile, exclaiming,
"Surely the bitterness of death is passed!"
But Samuel cried aloud, with kindled eyes,
"As thy sword hath made woman childless, so
Thy mother shall be childless among women,"
Then hewed him into pieces.

SUBALTERN.

Liar! no.

SOLDIER.

Come with me, and I'll show thee him divided
Into five Agags, — ay, and more. Let's reckon:
His hands are off, that sought to save his head,
Which is parted; and his arms and shoulders
Are carbonadoed, minced; and gashed his loins,
And all the cunning ways and means of life —

SUBALTERN.

A curse upon thee! hold. — Why Saul and Samuel
Even now to worship went. I'll not believe thee.

SOLDIER.

What, not believe! I tell thee that from worship
Samuel arose and slew him; and away

Is gone, each posting on his rapid route ;
To Gibeah Saul, and Samuel back to Ramah,
And certainly in mutual displeasure.

SUBALTERN.

With this division 'tween the Throne and Altar,
Israel can never prosper.

SOLDIER.

Wilt see Agag ?
Thou 'lt say he makes no handsomer a corpse
Than any of his subjects.

SUBALTERN.

Go : I follow.

[Exit, and re-enter near. SOLDIERS looking at the remains of Agag. An altar still smoking in the distance.]

SUBALTERN.

O, horrible ! This deed had better graced
Saul's blood-stained hand.

SOLDIER.

Thou saw'st him whilst he lived ;
Wouldst know him now that he is dead ?

SUBALTERN.

His own

Wives would not know him, who should know him best.
Poor wretch, but this sight melts me !

SOLDIER.

Pity not ;

He would have done as much for thee and me, —
Ay, or for Saul or Samuel. Listen how
The ground, after the soaking draught of blood,

Smacks its brown lips. It seems to like royal wine
Beyond small beer outleaked from beggar's veins.

SUBALTERN.

A beggar he ; none poorer now. Behold !
All sceptreless he lies, and none to bury him.
Sceptre ! he has no hands wherewith to wield it.

A SPECTATOR SOLDIER.

No : but he has two heads, or something like them ;
So, were he living, he might wear two crowns.
His face is cloven like a pomegranate :
See how his eyes distend, and gape his jaws !

SUBALTERN.

Ay, stricken with terror at Samuel's sword, his spirit
Seems to have leaped out both at doors and windows.
'T is a dread dissolution.

SOLDIER.

Why, all perish,
Even kings ; for all meet death at some time

SUBALTERN.

True,

Some crawling to it over eighty years ;
And some cast down from life's bright top and summit,
Like Agag, into darkness. If a foe
He was, let's not insult him, but remember,
That if his life was profligate and cruel,
His end's untimely and most tragical.
Gather his scattered relics, cover them
O'er with his blood-dyed robe, and let it be
His purple pall.

A SECOND SPECTATOR SOLDIER.

Here is a regal tooth.

A THIRD SPECTATOR SOLDIER.

Let's close his chine, and make his double face one.

SUBALTERN.

Jest not, to lighten your ill-favored task.
Spread the robe over him, and leave that form
Veiled, as his soul is hid now from our view,
Encountering, unseen, death's unknown hazard.
Quick at your gory labor : — cover him :
I hear the recommencement of the march.

*[Exeunt, having finished gathering the remains of Agag,
and enter a DEMON.]*

DEMON.

Seven days have angels of the bottomless pit
(Been driving thither Amalekitish ghosts,
Till few are left on earth. I think no demon
Has taken more than I myself have done ;
And now I 'll drop to Acheron. — But stay,
What have we here ? The mangled corse of Agag,
The cruel king of the Amalekites !
'T is warm as yet. Now evermore at death
The spirit lingers near the mortal clay :
Where, then, the soul of the late tyrant ? Ah,
Scared by the body's hideous spectacle,
Yonder it trembling stands, and onward come
(Sailing two goblins to arrest the shade ;
And now between them swift 't is borne away,
And, with such sombre and so sure convoy,
Drops low and lower to the deep abyss. —
(I 'll follow them : weary I grow of this.

[Exit, and enter two other DEMONS.]

FIRST DEMON.

Now let us down to hell ; we've seen the last.

SECOND DEMON.

Stay ; for the road thereto is yet encumbered
With the descending spectres of the killed.
'Tis said they choke hell's gates, and stretch from
thence

Out like a tongue upon the silent gulf ;
Wherein our spirits — like terrestrial ships
That are detained by foul winds in an offing —
Linger perforce, and feel broad gusts of sighs,
That swing them on the dark and billowless waste,
O'er which come sounds more dismal than the boom,
At mid night, of the salt-flood's foaming surf, —
Even dead Amalek's moan and lamentation.

FIRST DEMON.

He's lost, but not as we. I've neither pity
Nor spite concerning him ; for who can pity
Others in that which his own self endures
In greater measure ? Amalek is strange
To his vicissitude ; but he will grow
Inured thereunto, even as have others
Become inured to theirs. Rememberest thou
When, with those vast, inexorable rains,
Jehovah drowned the people of this world,
How long they lay upon the lumeless deep ;
How long they drifted through hell's gates ; how roared
Their grief ?

SECOND DEMON.

I do ; and laughter at them shook us, —
But they have been revenged upon us ; though
Full many a mistress, many a dalliance

Within Gehenna's undelightful walls,
That Godsend gave us, and on us bestowed
Some pleasure of change ; alas ! with pain repaid ;
For jealousy, if I remember well,
Came to us with the Antediluvians ; —
Those groundless taxings with unfaithfulness,
Those unhymeneal bickerings, but chiefly
Those ever-damning doubts that scourge so many
Worse than hell-flames.

FIRST DEMON.

Say rather, here, three thousand years ago,
'T was found by us midst the sweet girls of Cain,
Granddaughters of first Eve, and equal to her
In those soul-sensuous charms which she employed
On Adam, to his ruin, long before
The Deluge (which I deem that they deserved)
Sent the whole bevy to us. — But why trifle ?
Say, whereunto shall we betake ourselves,
To pass the hours, until we are compelled
Again to drop into our fiery prison ? —

SECOND DEMON.

Look who therefrom now cometh towards us sad, —
Peyona, Malzah's lover. Thou knowest Malzah :
Him, the facetious spirit, who, with mirth
Infectious, doth at times provoke half hell
To snap their fingers both at it and heaven.
I will accost her. Malzah's lately grown —
And here's the fruit of that forbidden tree
Which we first tasted on this carnal world —
Groundlessly jealous of her ; for sure never
More constant creature than herself e'er fell
From light, — indeed, from thence she did not fall,

But wandered freely to our gloomy pit,
After her lover, whom to seek was ruin.

(Enter PEYONA.)

Peyona, my pale pilgrim, whence art thou ?

PEYONA.

Tophet. Whence thou ?

SECOND DEMON.

The land of Amalek.

PEYONA.

Ah, the poor realm !

'T is said that, since the days of Jonathan,
Who conquered this, there has not been such slaughter.
You know, not I, the cause o' the carnage ; but
These mortals are continually frantic,
Or with desire, or changes of the moon,
Or lust of power, or lapses into rage,
At their own wrongs, or those their fathers left them,
To school them into malice.

FIRST DEMON.

Even so.

This hour, from Havilah to Shur is red
As Egypt was, when we, with heaven's angels
(Beneath the forms of Moses and the Priests)
Contending in the gamesome lists of magic,
Changed all her streams and lucid pools to blood.

PEYONA.

Ha, ha !

Those were the days of frolic ! Malzah laughed
For a whole century afterward. He would titter
While in his sleep, and, kissing and caressing,
Call me his frog, or louse, or pretty serpent.

And once he smote me such a blow, that I
 Still bear the mark on 't ; for he dreamed he saw
 Me, fascinated, speeding through the jaws
 Of one of Aaron's sacerdotal hydras,
 At which he aimed the blow that fell on me.
 Have you not seen him lately ? for I seek him :
 'T is many a day since I beheld his face.

SECOND DEMON.

Yonder he comes, if I may know his gait.

PEYONA.

'T is he indeed. How this would once have joyed me !
 But now I almost fear to look upon him.
 You'll stay and greet my mate ?

FIRST DEMON.

Excuse us, we
 Are on the eve of urgent business ;
 So will not stay to greet him, lest he should,
 With mystic charm, seduce us to his vein,
 And lead us, bound, to fields of dissipation.

*[Exeunt FIRST and SECOND DEMONS, and enter MAL-
 ZAH, stepping to the measure of his own words.]*

MALZAH.

Home to Gibeah the king is gone,
 With God's grace off, and man's dudgeon on.
 O yes, he is gone ; yes, home he is gone,
 And I there to meet him will surely make one.
 Ahinoam, his Queen, will wonder and pine ;
 His servants will pity, and some will divine ;
 And I will all hear as 'midst them I steer,
 And take from my hearing my strategy's line.

SAUL.

PEYONA.

I 've watched thy folly.

MALZAH.

Ah, one embrace! — But stay:

What brings thee hither?

(Enter ZOE.)

Here comes a Puritan.

[Exeunt MALZAH and PEYONA, hastily.]

ZOE.

Hell's ministers avoid my path,
 As though I moved in latent wrath;
 But I, on melancholy wing,
 Muse on my own late minist'ring.
 'T is ended now; 't is ended now;
 And I unto the issue bow.
 On Saul himself be all the blame.
 Saul could not more attention claim:
 A stronger influence from me
 Would have destroyed his liberty.
 His fault was found in his own heart:
 Faith lacking, all his works fell short.
 I for him sigh, — why should not I?
 I loved him when to me first given;
 But I 'll forget him now, and fly
 Again unto my seat in heaven.

[Exit ZOE, and re-enter MALZAH and PEYONA.]

MALZAH.

I do believe thee; — nay, I know thou 'rt true.
 I am the very Ass of Acheron
 To have brayed thus in thine ear. I promise thee
 That I will snort out no more jealousy: —

Yet when I doubt thee, perhaps I love thee most.
Come, let us kiss ere parting. (*Kisse: her.*)

My Peyona,

The scents of heaven yet hover round thy lips,
That are a garden of well-watered sweets ;
Which I must leave now for the arid desert
Of vexing Saul.

PEYONA.

I know thy taste for mischief ;
And all love's round, from this to summed desire,
Glads thee not more than does occasion offered
To gratify it. But what thing is that ?

(*Pointing to the corpse of Agag.*)

MALZAH.

A pie ; but made, sprite, when the cook was angry.
Look on it, for 't is worthy thine inspection :
't is concocted of a certain king,
Agag by name. His bloody, stiffening robe,
Around it thrown, makes a fine incrustation.
Upon this grand updishing of his kingdom,
He is brought in at the last as the dessert, —
And I opine he has here his desert, —
And is served up in a most royal fashion.

PEYONA.

O, canst thou jest at such a hideous sight ?
I'll go no nearer to it, — no, not I.

MALZAH.

We must now rip ourselves asunder. Come,
Bid me farewell again ; and I'll expire
Till quickened i' the resurrection of thy countenance.
Farewell, my squeamish, ever-gentle goblin.

[*Exit PEYONA.*]

I like not blood myself, and such dread carving
Makes one both sick and savage : but 't is true
(For I beheld this tragedy performed)
These priests delight to school and humble kings.
Ay, ay, dead tyrant, this is degradation :
The flies already take thee for a dunghill.
Faugh ! who 'd stay here that did rejoice in nostrils !
Now, over sweeter fields and running brooks
I 'll follow Saul, who has just lost his relish
For man-killing ; grown surfeited and sick, —
As well he may, after his bloody courses.
I 'll follow him, and see how he 'll take bitters.

[Exit.





ACT V.

SCENE I.

Space. Confines of Heaven. The ANGEL that appeared in the fifth scene, Act IV. descending.

ANGEL.

Again, from near the throne down sent,
To earth I take my way ;
Commanded by the Omnipotent,
To Samuel thus to say :

“ How long wilt thou lament for Saul,
Ejected from his regal height ?
Now fill thy horn with oil, and go
To Jesse the Beth-lehemite ;
For I have to myself a king
Provided from amongst his sons.”

Thus said the Lord, and whispering
Arose 'mongst the angelic throngs,
And mournful looks, as I took wing,
While sank to silence half their songs.

For sad my errand is for Saul ;
And grief shall fill his soul with groans ;
He who no more on Heaven may call,
But make in madness angry moans.

So urge I on a downward wing, —
I who am of the chosen seven,
Whose occupation is to bring
To earth the high behests of Heaven : —

Again to Ramah speed my flight,
To seek before the Seer to lay
The words of Heaven at dead of night,
And leave him ere the dawn of day.

[*Disappears.*]

SCENE II.

Ramah. Time, morning. A room in SAMUEL'S dwelling.
Enter SAMUEL.

SAMUEL.

No hope, no more probation now, for Saul !
I must depart ; this vision was divine : —
Yet Saul will kill me if he know mine errand.
They tell me that he rages, and in chief
'Gainst me. Show me what I shall do, O Lord !

VOICE OF THE LORD.

Fear not fierce Saul ; to Beth-lehem go,
And with thee take a heifer fair :
To sacrifice it unto me
Say is the end that brings thee there.
Then, consecrated, to the feast
Bid Jesse and his sons to go ;
And from amongst them him anoint
Whom I that hour shall to thee show.

SAMUEL.

It is enough : now, Saul, I fear thee not ! —
Though never canst thou be by me forgot.

[Exit.]

ANGEL.

Swiftly let me now return
To my shining seat on high ;
Lo ! the breaking light is born,
Lo ! the day-dawn I descry ; —
Up the opening track of morn
Let me like the lightning fly : —
Up the hollow darkness borne,
Up the hollow of the sky ; —
Let me, who for heaven yearn,
Through the melting shadows hie ; —
Where the stars, of lustre shorn,
In the light of morning die ; —
I who ever starlike burn,
I who ever heavenward turn,
Let me soon to heaven draw nigh ; —
There, with wings my visage shading,
Midst effulgence never fading,
“ Holy ! holy ! holy ! ” cry. [Disappears.]

SCENE III.

*Gibeah. An apartment in the Palace. Enter SAUL, musing,
and with a melancholy air.*

SAUL.

If I rejected be, I too may have
Rejected ; for I feel that I am changed.
Revulsion cold, and hot resentment, fill me.
I am as he, who, to his enemy

Having made fair offers, spurned with proud disdain,
 Pays his disdainer with malicious scorn.
 Is it the skies I scorn? — O no; for who
 So hardy as to scorn the Omnipotent? —
 Samuel I scorn, for he unjust is towards me! —
 Yea Heaven unjust is too. — O, peace, my tongue. —
 And yet I am indubitably changed:
 My heart now never beats up heavenward.
 Once was I as a bird that took slight soars;
 Now, never mounts my soul above the ground.
 I have no God-ward movings now: no God
 Now, from his genial seat of light remote,
 Sends down on me a ray. Yet I'll endure:
 Though now 't is night, 't will break again in day.

[Exit.]

SCENE IV.

BETH-LEHEM. *A spacious apartment with preparations as for a feast. SAMUEL, ELDERS, JESSE, and others who have been called.*

SAMUEL.

Now bid thy sons come here that I may see them.
(JESSE motions to one who goes out, and ELIAB enters.)
 Surely the Lord's Anointed is before him!

VOICE OF AN ANGEL.

Hesitate, thou man of God;
 Tarry, venerable seer;
 For the Lord's Anointed yet
 Is not, as thou deemest, near.
 Rate not Eliab by thine eye,
 Tall of stature, stern of mien;

Worth by outer show 's unseen, —
God the heart sees ; pass him by.

(ABINADAB enters.)

Also this of lordly port ;

(SHAMMAH enters.)

Likewise this of equal sort ;

(Seven other sons of JESSE enter consecutively.)

And the seven that, in vain,
Enter in a gallant train.

SAMUEL.

Are all thy children here ?

JESSE.

There yet is one, —
The youngest, who remains, and tends the sheep.

SAMUEL.

Send for him : we will not eat until he come.

(A young man goes to fetch DAVID.)

VOICE OF AN ANGEL.

Over field and over brook
Runs the swift and wondering hind ;
David, with his pipe and crook,
Feeding of his flock, to find.

To a cupped and covert hollow
David did his flock late follow ; —
Hark, how holloweth the hind !

"David ! David !" he is calling ;
Faint his voice and fainter falling, —
Fainter on the wayworn wind :

David, deep in shadow dimming,
Charmed with sounds of heavenly hymning,
Unto revery resigned.

Rapt in revery, — revery deeper
Than the sleep of soundest sleeper, —
Hears he not the hollowing hind.

Holla, holla, holla, holla,
"David!" still doth "Dav'd!" follow, —
Follow on the wafting wind:

Till, from revery awaking,
He his flowery seat forsaking,
Learns the errand of the hind:

With him hastens, whilst 't is told him: —
Enters, look, a man, behold him,
After God's own heart and mind.

(Enter DAVID.)

VOICE OF GOD.

On that head shall sit the crown.
Rise, anoint him, for 't is he
Who, though now unpriized, unknown,
Famous shall hereafter be.

SAMUEL.

Come hither, son; and may Jehovah bless thee!

(Anointing DAVID.)

As I upon thy head now pour this oil,
So may the Lord on thee outpour his spirit.

(Having anointed DAVID.)

Now let us eat, for I must soon be gone.

JESSE.

Thou wilt not tempt the night?

SAMUEL.

'T is always day
To those for whom Jehovah lights the way.
I too long linger from the shades of Ramah.
(The repast being finished, all depart except DAVID.)

DAVID.

What meaneth this ? why am I singled out,
The youngest born, for this unusual honor ?
Why am I consecrated ? to what end ?
I 'm lost in wonder ; and where'er I turn
My eyes I see the same. Alas, I fear
Eliab 's not my friend, although my brother ;
For he regards me with vexed, haughty looks.
My sire says nothing ; and the elders smile ;
While Samuel brake not silence on its meaning.
Fear mingles with my joy. This is the Lord ;
And I must wait till he shall make that clear
Which is left dark by his departed seer.

[Exit.

VOICES OF ANGELS (*chanting.*)

Joy ! 't is done ; and royal grace
Now are David's and his race ;
Saul, who from him good hath driven,
Up to evil influence given.

SCENE V.

*The neighborhood of Gibeah. Time, before daybreak. Enter
ZAPH and ZEPHO.*

ZAPH.

Zepho, our spirits come not : what 's the matter ?
Surely they cannot have been intercepted !
I know that heaven's haughty ministers
Are more than ever found on the alert.
Be watchful ; for I apprehend intrusion,
Either from Gloriel or from his troop.

SAUL.

ZEPHO.

Nor Gloriel, nor any of the minions
Who with him wear the livery of heaven,
And who have lately shown such zeal to thwart us,
Shall steal upon your session whilst I'm sentry.

ZAPH.

Why are my spirits late?

(A cock crows at a distance.)

Hark; chanticleer
Breaks with his voice the bubble of the night,
Even now the dawn is in the east fermenting.

(Enter ZAPH'S DEMONS hastily.)

Is this the hour that you were summoned for?
Marshal yourselves about me; and now, Zepho,
Around about us wing continually,
And warn me if thou hear'st aught.

ZEPHO.

I will fly

So swiftly round you, that I'll be a fence,
Like the Divine, in every part at once.

[Exit ZEPHO.]

ZAPH.

Laggards, tell me of your cheer,
Since you last assembled here.
Zobah, what hast thou been doing?

ZOBAB.

Marry, I have been a-wooing.

ZAPH.

Fellow, thou wert aye a jester!
Even in heaven thou didst pester

Them who ruled thee : now, be sober ;
 Or I bind thee on October's
 Raging wings, and to the north
 Send thee of the frozen earth :
 There unto thyself to gibber,)
 In the pangs of cold to quiver ;
 Where the pinching climate must
 Separate thee from thy lust.

ZOBAB.

Debarred the sun ?
 None labor harder. —

ZAPH.

What hast thou done ?
 I see thou toiledst last at the larder : —
 Grossest spirit, that can steal
 Into drugs that warp the will ;
 And consent to dwell in wine
 Poured down throats of men like swine :
 Or, provoking rank congestion,
 Squat thee, littled, in confection :
 Smothered thus, or drowned in cream,
 Strive of heaven's ambrosia dream.
 Fallen spirit, 't is the mind,
 Stiff and stubborn, makes our kind.
 What art thou ? Celestial sow.
 Go, and let the Arctic wind
 Through and through thee purge and find.

ZOBAB.

Oh, oh ! oh, oh !
 Shall I do wrong, and then deny it ?
 'T is grief and hell's abstemious diet
 That makes me thus on earth run riot.

ZAPH.

I've caught thee, varlet,
 Playing the harlot,
 Drawing forth maid's spicy breath :
 Like the cat on the cradled infant,
 On them thou hast sat, a death ; —
 Baleful, to their breast propinquant,
 Purring in thy fulsome zest ;
 Till I, coming on thee instant,
 Struck thee thencefrom, hateful pest.
 Thou wert a lecher ere the flood,
 And tall Anak's spiry brood
 Point towards thee.

ZOBAB.

'T is calumny.

ZAPH.

Begone ! *[Exit ZOBAB, sullenly.]*
 A goblin of ignoble mind ! —
 Were all like him,
 Intent to please a passing whim,
 Gigantic had become mankind.
 Widewing, what hast thou been doing ?
 I hope some lawful mischief brewing.

WIDEWING.

O'er the earth, and up the air,
 Passing regions cool and fair,
 I have voyaged ; beyond the bounds
 Of our customary rounds.
 Even soared to heaven's gate,
 Even on heaven's threshold sate ;
 Sang thereon a plaintive ditty,
 Many an angel moved to pity ; —
 Many an angel whom I knew,

Moved to pity ; — till a few
 Sudden rose, and thence in ire
 Drove me with empyreal fire ; —
 Drove me down the starred abyss,
 Lashed with lightnings down to this ; —
 Stricken thence and spiteful spurned,
 All the way I, waxing, burned ; —
 Burned alike with fire and shame,
 Wrapped in wreaths of forked flame,
 Comet-like I hither came.

ZAPH.

Universe-exploring spirit,
 Great indeed I find thy merit ! —
 Thou dost deserve to find the clew,
 Leads back to heaven hell's valiant crew.
 Now, Sitstill, thou in turn declare
 Thy diligence on earth, in air,
 What hast thou done ?

SITSTILL.

A general view

I've taken of that hybrid crew,
 Mankind, — that procreated race,
 Which holds 'twixt us and brutes the place ;
 And have to this conclusion come, —
 We might as well abide at home :
 Or, from earth's peaks and mountains high,
 Gaze up into the cheerful sky ;
 For dull is Acheron, and would range
 Thence many, for mere love of change. —
 Let's leave man, master ; let's exempt him :
 Wealth, wine, and women, they can tempt him : —
 And women, they can tempt themselves.

This conduct many troubles shelve,
 And leaves us leisure : — ne'er expect
 Good, where sense wars with intellect :
 With men, their senses are but holes
 Through which creep sins to tempt their souls.

ZAPH.

Thou say'st not well. Next, Sardon speak ;
 Quick, the morn' apace doth break.
 Say, whence art thou ?

SARDON.

I come from Tophet ;
 Thither sent by Gloriel's buffet ; —

ZAPH.

How ?

SARDON.

Struck down whirling into hell

ZAPH.

So dread a fall, and thou here well ! —
 This surely is a guarantee
 We in immortal mould now be :
 For what mere mortal wight could keep
 His life, cycloiding down the steep ?
 For this, I'll Gloriel meet some day,
 And call him to account ; — but stay,
 I hear the air commence to sing : —
 It does, but not from Zepho's wing.

ZEPHO (*without*).

Who there wingeth ? Speak ! what, ho !
 Answer, art thou friend or foe ? —
 Who there cometh rudely dumb

Onward with a murmuring hum?
Give the word, or ere I roll
Vengeful volley through thy soul. —
Heardst thou not my voice afar?
Stay, my fellow-fallen star.

MALZAH (*without*).

Who art thou wouldst Malzah bar? (*Enters.*)

ZAPH.

Welcome, Malzah; welcome, sprite;
Welcomer than longer night
Just now would be! What hast for me?

MALZAH.

Tidings of the royal Saul,
King of Israel.

ZAPH.

Shall he fall?

MALZAH.

I deem he will, for much he dares.
Twice he has tripped, half unawares; —
Twice, in spite of Zoe's cares;
She who late did him defend:
Zoe's guardianship doth end.
If thou wilt, I'll at him venture.

ZAPH.

Go, brave spirit, strive him enter.

[*Exit* MALZAH.]

It grows too light: — lo! withering are
Both Jupiter and the morning star:
And, see! Aurora peeping there

On the eastern eaves, — of her beware ;
 For that her pale, untinted ray
 May light our enemies this way.
 So, with low voice, and accents brief,
 Tell me, conjointly and in chief,
 What ye have suffered, or what done
 To spread the power of Acheron.
 Me answer all ;
 And let your quick words muffled fall.

ALL.

Master, master, some disaster
 Hath befallen us, but much more
 Hath success ; and mortals sore
 We have troubled, having doubled
 Evil, latent in their core.

ZAPH.

This is well ; 't will gladden hell.
 Pass away and work it more.

[*The DEMONS vanish.*]

Zepho, hither :

(Enter ZEPHO.)

The spirits are gone, and for the ether
 I am ready.

ZEPHO.

On my shoulders take thy seat.

(ZAPH vaults upon ZEPHO's shoulders.)

Sir, be steady !

Whither shall I bear thee fleet ?

ZAPH.

I have business, if I choose,
 Beckons me to Tartarus ;

But I will not : — to the moon
Let me now be carried soon.

ZEPHO.

When last there thou soon grew'st weary,
'T was so full of valleys dreary ;
Nor thereon a rood of sea
Wherein thou mightest mirror thee.
Let 's to Limbo.

ZAPH.

Then to Limbo : in a trice,
Lay me in th' Fool's Paradise.

[Exeunt, and enter a HEBREW, hesitatingly.]

HEBREW.

'T is said
That, at the dayspring, dark and evil spirits
Break up their nightly meetin' s, where they dance
To parodies of strains they learned in heaven.
But now the air is purged from evil angels,
Which is at dusk delivered unto them.
All night the air's their feoff and foul domain ;
But at the dawn they flee, and holy angels,
Opening the gates o' the East, as now they're doing,
Guard the awakening world. Yet then, 't is said,
Apollyon's self, or some one of his creatures,
Like a shy reveller's seen stealing homewards ;
Now in the likeness of a rook, and now
Low scudding o'er the twilit common, as
A gray and silent owlet ; and at times,
In the disguise of a grim footpad's met,
Hastening from out of yon dark Gibeah : —
Let me now haste, for, to my startled sense,
There seemed the powers of darkness hastening hence.
[Exit.]

SCENE VI.

Gibeah. Interior of SAUL's palace.

MALZAH (*footing it to the measure of his own words*).

God's permitted me,
He's admitted me
Into King Saul's heart ;
Wherein shall work strange wickedness,
Ere I from it depart.

Hory, gory, already Saul's story
Hath a tragical chime ;
Hory, gory, how Saul's glory
'S perishing in its prime !
Ha, ha, ha ! it shall be my aim
To drag him into crime.

I've him visited,
Improvised
Him with his first rage ;
And from his groans and threats I do
Some merriment presage.

Himble, nimble ! never so nimble
Since fell I from on high ;
And whilst I'm out, I'll take a route
And ramble up the sky.
Ha, ha ! ha, ha ! ere this, on earth,
I've seen a dancing bear ;
But naught, in pure, exalted mirth,
That could with me compare.
I'm happy, very ; I'm growing merry ;
I'm in a mood most rare ; —

Shall I the empyrean pierce to see
If heaven still hangeth there?

Yes, were it not the roarer of all jests,
To up and peep at the outside of heaven?
Beyond all questioning, it would be so:
Therefore I'll treat Səul with becoming leisure,
For business still should alternate with pleasure.

[Exit gayly.]

SCENE VII.

*Space. An angel, by name ZELEHTHA, descending; and the
angel lately messenger to SAMUEL, ascending.*

MESSENGER ANGEL.

Whither art thou descending, sweet Zelehtha?

ZELEHTHA.

To earth, thereon to seek a certain spirit,
Who has been trespassing on heaven's light;
And whom we deem to be — like to that other,
Who lately was cast howling from heaven's threshold, —
One of the troop of the notorious Zaph.

MESSENGER ANGEL.

Hath he a roguish look?

ZELEHTHA.

He hath.

MESSENGER ANGEL.

Then I,

Even now, as I was leaving earth, have met him,
Downwards towards Lebanon flying. Steer thou by
Yon orient cloud. Farewell.

[Disappears, ascending.]

ZELEHTHA.

'T is Nardiel,

The ever-journeying angel of the Lord.
 What an aurorial hue and morning tinge,
 The constant-fanning ether gives his form !
 I did not deem, before, that he had known me :
 'T is well I met him, for he 'll save me search
 For that malevolent, aspiring fiend,
 Whom I am seeking for. Yonder he is ;
 And must be in my thralldom until Heaven
 Release both him and me from Saul, and I 'll
 Deal rudely with him at the first, for hell
 Has lately grown defiant and refractory.

[Disappears, descending between the clouds.]

SCENE VIII.

*Interior of SAUL's palace at Gibeah. MALZAH, hurled in
 from above, and lying prostrate.*

MALZAH.

Oh, hurt, unutterably hurt ! — dashed, dashed
 To pieces ! — oh ! I am cut up, disjointed ;
 There 's nothing whole within me, nothing straight ;
 My very thoughts and essence are in spirals.
 Who, after this, will rashly go a-soaring ?
 And yet I half forgive the hurricane-sender,
 When I consider that she has but swept me
 Whither I meant to come. She might have pitched me
 To Tophet, 'midst the laughter of the fiends.
 Oh, oh, these throes ! — but I will be revenged.
 I never felt before such ghastly torment.
 I 've all the arrows of the frosty wind

Sticking within me ; and the forest boughs
Have sliced and torn me. Do not let me laugh :
I cannot bear to laugh ; — oh, oh, that shake !
'T is hard a wretch cannot grin at his own disaster,
For I could crack day's tympanum with laughter.
I've got a twist, albeit about the reins,
One which will hold me, perhaps, a thousand years.
Beshrew the dazzling one, and her stout gust !
May she fade from this very hour, when she forgot
The gentleness that most adorns her sex.
Nay, nay ; the very strumpets of the Hebrews,
The dirty commoners who walk the streets
Of Gibeah, or prowl i' the environs,
Contaminated and contaminating,
Do yet retain compassion. O, but this
Is dreadful, far beyond aught in our annals :
Since the great rough-and-tumble down the skies,
When sex and friendship were alike forgotten
Throughout heaven's host, there has been nothing
like it.

But I will be revenged, even yet, for this :
I'll turn it into verses, yet, which shall
Be sung, or howled, at the heels of heaven's bright fops,
Till they, for very shame, shall shun the earth,
And leave it echoing to us in our mirth.
'T is the most scandalous assault ever known ;
Most unprovoked : forsooth, because (for what
Is't more ?) — because, forsooth, I yesterday
Flew up towards heaven, down pops me this virago ;
And with no warning, save her coming's brightness,
(Which I will dim when I next on her come,)
Even as I whistling sat upon a bank,
Dastardly hurls a whirlwind at my flank.
May the rigidity that haunts the age

Of mortals hamper her aerial sinews !
 Oh, oh ! my curses to myself return :
 I'm stiff already, and shall grow yet stiffer.
 Oh, oh ! but now I ache. A thunderbolt
 Would not have so disabled me. Fie ! fie !
 There is no love instinctive 'twixt heaven's sexes ;
 'T is true she is a saint, and I'm a sinner —
 But what of that ? do we not feel in common ?
 No, they feel not for pain who've known but pleasure ;
 The cruel Quean ! curse her, I would not kiss her
 Unless my lips were snakes to sting and hiss her ;
 May she grow bleared for this, like antique mortals !
 May rottenness and decay yet eat her up !
 May she be annihilated, who has half
 Annihilated me ! — But, soft ; methinks
 I feel the anguish of my frame decreasing ;
 My strength returns ; I feel my joints reknitting,
 Though 't will be years before I'm lithe and sound,
 And my big injury cannot be removed
 Except by her o'erthrowal. — Never mind ;
 Each in his term, each in his time ; and I
 Can wait ; 't is a long lapse, eternity.
 Let me arise and straight redeem the time. —
 This is the time, the time ; for, as I think,
 'T is the full moon, the most auspicious season
 For operating on the human reason.
 I'll go seek Saul, and vex him while I'm savage.

[Exit, and, after a while, re-enter.]

I cannot do it !
 Nay, nay ; I'll brave Zaph's uttermost displeasure.
 What hath Saul done to me that I should plague him ?
 It goes against my heart and conscience thus
 To rack his body and deprave his mind.
 Oh, how he groans, and sighs, and swears, and reasons !

Nay, by the pith of goodness yet left in me,
 It me unfiends to see and listen to him.
 Give me a ground of quarrel with him ; let
 Me know that he habitually derides us,
 Or that he charges us with the corruption
 Of his own heart, as many do with theirs,
 And I will trouble him to Zaph's desire.
 Or pit me against a standing enemy,
 An angel ; bid me to insult the Dreadest,
 And I will do it : but for this poor king,
 I have no provocation to sustain me
 I' the process of his injuring. Would that Heaven
 Might hither send in force its champions,
 And drive me from him.

(Enter ZELETHA.)

Ah, again ! Why hast
 Thou followed me hither ? Comest thou once more
 With cunningest concealment of thy blast ?
 Or deemst that I will not oppose a fair one ?
 Hence, or it shall be said that we have striven
 In wrath, who should have graced a softer tale ;
 Hence, or I'll drive thee instant up to heaven,
 Or drag thee downwards to the pit of bale.
 O thou empyreal minion ! but there was
 A time when thou couldst not have thus compelled me.
 I have no power except to wish thee evil.
 May all the essence from thy form distil,
 And waste thee into blank oblivion !

ZELETHA.

Thou unassiduous and errant spirit,
 Go and plague Saul.

MALZAH.

Not at thy bidding. No !

ZELENTHA.

To him, and leave him not until the hour
When thou hast done thy work.

MALZAH (*aside*).

I must obey ; I know I must. Curse her!—
Peace ; I believe she knows my inmost thoughts.

(*Aloud.*)

How long wilt thou enthrall me ? I'll not obey thee ;
I am Zaph's minister, not thine. I am
The serf of Lucifer ; and I will pay,
For I do owe, no service to Jehovah. —
O, look not on me ; I will go vex Saul.

[*Exit, followed by ZELENTHA.*]

SCENE IX.

The same.

SAUL (*now possessed by MALZAH*), *rushing in wildly.*
What ails me ? what impels me on, until
The big drops fall from off my brow ? Whence comes
This strange affliction ? — Oh, to be thus driven
About ! — I will stand still : now move me aught
That can. Ah, shake me, thing ; shake me again
Like an old thorn i' the blast ! 'T is leaving me ;
Oh that it were forever ! Oh, how long
Shall this fierce malady continue, these
Dread visitations ? See, 't is here again !
What's here again ? Or who ? Here's none save I ; —
And yet there's some one here. 'T is here, 't is here,
Within my brain ; — no, it is in my heart, —

Within my soul ; where rise again black thoughts
And horrible conceptions, that from hell
Might have come up. All blasphemies my ears
Ever heard ; my horridest ideas in dreams ;
And impious conceits, that even a fiend
Methinks could scarcely muster, swarm within
Me, rank and black as summer flies on ordure.
Oh, what a den this moment is my breast !
How cold I feel, how cruel and invidious.
Now let no child of mine approach me ; neither
Do thou come near to me, Ahinoam,
Their mother and the wife I dearly love ;
For now the universe appears one field
On which to spend my rancor. Oh, disperse,
Fit, nor return with thy o'erwhelming shadows !
Oh, that it would begone and leave me in
My sorrow ! Surely 't is enough to live
In lone despair. To reign is care enough,
Even in rude health ; but to be harassed thus
By an unnamed affliction ; — and why harassed ?
Oh, why am I thus harassed ! I have heard
Of wretches raging under sharp remorse ;
Of cruel monarchs, in their latter days,
Falling a prey to an accusing conscience ;
But why should I, whose faults smite but myself,
Be thus tormented ?

(Enter the QUEEN.)

QUEEN.

O, be soothed, my Saul ;
My husband, O my king, be calmed.

SAUL.

Am I not calm ?

SAUL.

QUEEN.

You were not lately : far off I heard you ; yea,
Your servants must have heard you.

SAUL.

Let them hear me,
Since God will hear me not. I tell thee, wife,
I'll on him call no more, nor sacrifice.

QUEEN.

O, speak not thus !

SAUL.

I will thus speak.

QUEEN (*weeping*).

Alas,

What shall I do !

SAUL.

Ay, what shall I do too !

I have no tears to shed as woman hath :
My grief must burn within me, or o'erflow
In tragic deeds, or those foul blasphemies
Which, from my soul's ooze, are uplifted by
My horrid agitation. Weep ? No, no.
And yet I have wept too, but secretly.
Ay, ay, convulse me once again, strange forces.
Whate'er thou art that rends me, I defy thee !
Ah me ! to be thus clutched ! Ahinoam !
Help, help ; pray for me, Ahinoam.

QUEEN.

O Heaven,
Great Heaven, help a helpless wife ; O hear her : —
Hear me, Jehovah ; hear me for my husband !
O Thou that canst control the furious storm,
Rescue great Israel from his gusty pangs ;

Cure his distemper, lighten his sad heart ;
 Assuage, O God, assuage his torment, or
 Let me endure it and to him give ease.

SAUL.

O wife, it is not these corporeal pains —
 Though they are past description — that unman me ;
 But 't is the horrid o'erthrow of my mind,
 My will's harsh subjugation bows me down.
 I know the strength of man : I know a spasm
 Can paralyze it ; I know his cogitation
 May fail at an impertinent idea :
 But to have the soul swallowed up of its own self,
 Like ocean by its own devouring sands,
 Or the clear sun high in the firmament,
 Thence downwards sucked and quenched in a volcano, —
 O, no stout-hearted courage can brave that !
 I would that I could guide my thoughts ! but no ;
 The king's most lawless subject is himself.
 His thoughts of late have strangely scorned his rule.
 They are as shifting winds that scorn the sun ;
 Ay, fickler are they than the April hours :
 Some fair enough, some sorrowful, and some
 I know not what they 're like, nor whence they come ;
 Inconsequential, so like imps of hell,
 That I would not be their progenitor
 For half my crown. No, no, I loathe
 Such inspirations, in me but not of me ;
 Things that seem to me on the hot winds blown
 Of some infernal desert ; scorpions, dragons ;
 Inbreathings, no acknowledged brood of mine,
 By thought on thought begotten. — Dry thy tears ;
 Now ended is that fearful paroxysm.

SAUL.

QUEEN.

Would that you had some cure !

SAUL.

Would that I had !

But let us hence ; I am no longer mad.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE X.

An apartment in the palace. The QUEEN and a PHYSICIAN.

PHYSICIAN.

His Majesty seems nigh in perfect health ;
For, save when he is suffering in the fit
(When I have marked his pulse most riotous),
His frame displays no symptom of disease.

QUEEN.

No ? Looks his eye as clear and bright as ever,
As healthful his complexion ? Is his voice
Strong, nor ever rumbles hollowly in his breast,
Like spirit speaking from a sepulchre ?
Does he ne'er seem to sigh without occasion ?
I hear him groan throughout the livelong night ;
And he informs me that he 's vexed with dreams,
Wherein a form seems ever beckoning him
To rise and follow it to violent deeds ;
Or, in his otherwise sound slumber, something
Beats at the doors and windows of his senses,
Demanding entrance. Tell me what these mean. .

PHYSICIAN.

Whate'er their meaning, they 're of one complexion
With his day's paroxysms. This much I know,

(Enter SAUL, unobserved.)

The King hath certainly a mania,
An intermittent mania, but of such
Unusual kind, that I divine not yet
Its hidden nature, and hence hesitate
To treat him for it.

SAUL.

Look deeper than the skin ;
Then find me 'mongst thy compounds or thy simples
An anodyne for undeserved distress.
Doctor, I have a stubborn melancholy ;
Move it, and I will make thee king of physic.

PHYSICIAN.

Your Majesty bids me exercise an art
That I profess not : but as water-drops
Slowly remove whate'er they fall upon,
So may the cadent moments of your life
Gently remove your trouble. Time is the skilfullest
Physician and tenderest nurse.

SAUL.

But memory
Is time's defier.

PHYSICIAN.

To know is not to suffer
Always ; for wrongs, like men, grow weak when old. —
But I'm too bold, your Majesty.

SAUL.

We've heard
That, toward the west, a people live believing
There is a river that can wash the past
From out the memory.

SAUL.

PHYSICIAN.

I've travelled 'mongst them :

But they believe 't is only after death
That those dark waters can avail the spirit ;
Which, losing the remembrance of past evil,
Resigns therewith the memory of past good.

SAUL.

I ask not such oblivion ! But hast nothing
That can avail a mortal whilst he lives ?
What are the dead to thee !

PHYSICIAN.

Your Majesty,

Herein I cannot help you : — I have no opiate
That can assuage the anguish of the spirit ;
Nor subtle, fine astringent is there known
Can bind the wanderings of a lawless fancy ;
No soft, insinuating balsam that
Can through the body reach the sickly soul.

SAUL.

Hast naught, then, in thy dispensatory ?

PHYSICIAN.

I've sedatives, narcotics, tonics too —

SAUL.

Give me a tonic for the heart.

PHYSICIAN.

The King

Is strong of heart, or he had not delivered
Us from our enemies as he hath done.

SAUL.

O Prince of flatterers, but Beggar of doctors,
How poor thou art to him who truly needs !
The mind, the mind 's the only worthy patient.
Were I one of thy craft, ere this I 'd have
Anatomized a Spirit ; I 'd have treated
Soul-wounds of my own making ; and, especially,
I would have sought out sundry wasted wretches,
And striven to cauterize to satisfaction
The gangrenes of their past. — Ye are impostors ;
All said, ye are impostors ; fleas. — Skin-deep
Is deep with you : you only prick the flesh,
When you should probe the overwhelmed heart,
And lance the horny wounds of old despair.
Away ; Death is worth all the doctors.

PHYSICIAN (*aside*).

I 'll speak the truth to him whate'er the result.
(*Aloud.*) My liege, forgive me, for you have encouraged
Me, by your gracious freedom, to be bold :
You have an evil spirit from the Lord.

SAUL.

Ay, I am filled with evil whilst my fit
Continues, and do scores of murders then,
In fancy, and, in my excited hour,
Abominations work for which there is
No name in the vocabulary, whose worst
Expressions seem soft terms of innocence,
Compared with the big syllables required
To express me fully, when, in cruelty
And guile, the very soul of Moloch and
The machinations of the cunningest fiends
That walk the bottomless pit, and therein ply

Their fruitful fancies to deceive the world,
Move me 'midst black temptation. O, I breathe
Then the live coals of hell, and all my heart
Glow's ruddier than Tophet's angry noon,
So bloody is my soul, and wrapped in sable.
Say, what's our cure ?

QUEEN.

O, fail not now his need !

PHYSICIAN.

Music can make the raging maniac gentle
As is the slumbering babe ; and hold in thrall
The demon till he smile like to an angel,
And creep from out his victim to the air,
To walk enrapt and harmless on the earth,
As erst he trod the blue abyss of heaven.

SAUL.

I envy him his dole : a minstrel seek
Me then.

PHYSICIAN.

Your Majesty, I have beheld
A son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite ;
A most consummate player on the harp ;
Handsome and brave ; familiar with arms ;
One with whom dwells the Spirit of the Lord :
He keeps his father's sheep : his name is David.

SAUL.

Straight send a messenger unto his father,
Bidding him send his son to court. [*Exit* PHYSICIAN.
Dost hear, sweet,
How that the Devil is subdued by sound ?
He cannot be all evil then ; for music

Moves but that portion of us which is good.
Nay, dry thy tears. Come, come. Sweet medicine
Were music, and, undoubtedly, effective ;
For I remember, lately, when possessed,
Wandering beyond the limits of the garden,
Into the wood, upon a breezy day,
The sound of the swift brook assuaged my madness,
That, as I stood absorbed upon the bank,
Ebbd from me in unconscious, tender sighs.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE XI.

The garden of the palace. Enter two DOMESTICS.

FIRST DOMESTIC.

How is the King to-day ?

SECOND DOMESTIC.

He's furious ;

None dare approach him, and the very dogs
Shrink from him howling as they cross his path.

FIRST DOMESTIC.

O, horrible ! a king to be so vexed !

SECOND DOMESTIC.

I met him even now, and he did fix
His eyes upon me in such savage sort,
I turned to avoid him ; but he followed me
With vigorous strides, and on me poured hoarse curses,
Hissing 'twixt each like a serpent. Terrified,
I looked behind me, and him saw returning
Upon his steps ! yet his deep growls I heard,

SICIAN.
weet,

And sounds as if of horrid chidings, that
He seemed to reply to in an abject sort ;
And cast himself at last sheer on the ground,
And struggled 'mongst the shrubs like to a dragon,
Dust-covered and as contending with a foe ;
Then writhed in helplessness as if o'ercome,
And, panting, lay at last supine and moaning.

FIRST DOMESTIC.

What didst thou then ?

SECOND DOMESTIC.

I dared not re-approach him.
I stood and watched him till he seemed to sleep ;
Then came I hither.

FIRST DOMESTIC.

Dost thou think he will
Awake, and, prowling in his mood malicious,
Come stumbling here upon us ?

SECOND DOMESTIC.

Heaven forefend !
For he would not respect us : — nay, 't is said
That madmen are most bitter against those
Whom most they love in their clear hours of saneness.

FIRST DOMESTIC.

Hearken ! what sound is that ?

SECOND DOMESTIC.

It is the harp
O' the stripling David, whom the King hath sent for
To soothe him in his hour. See where he sits,
Like to a youthful angel on the mount
In Paradise. The Queen hath shrewdly set him

Hard by the lattice of the royal chamber,
So that the king may hear him and be taken
In his own lure.

FIRST DOMESTIC.

But will the evil spirit
Permit him to approach its enemy ?

SECOND DOMESTIC.

I've heard all spirits — fallen ones as well as they
That are unfallen — have delight in music,
It being that which gave most zest to heaven.
Listen, is it not sweet ?

FIRST DOMESTIC.

'T is more than sweet ;
'T would soothe a tiger, or the wretch that droops
Beneath despair, or him whose soul is chafing
Against itself ; seized by some rude remorse
Of sweeping passion, even as the big,
Abraded boulder of the swollen brook,
Rolling and wasted underneath the rush
Of worrying waves. 'T would lift that back to hope,
This back to peace.

SECOND DOMESTIC.

Lo, where the King comes back !
How formidable he seems ! — but now thou 'dst think
Him tame, hadst thou but seen him lately. Mark him.

FIRST DOMESTIC.

I do, even in fear ; for yet his lips
Are muttering, and roll his cloudy eyes.
I hope he will not pass us.

SECOND DOMESTIC.

Stand aside :

Behold, this way he comes with heavy steps ;
Stooping, and with his tongue lolling out and bloody.
Alas, how brutalized, how laden with sorrows !
He feels his degradation, and he snorts,
Shaking his uncombed and luxuriant locks,
Like to an angry steed that meditates
To throw its rider.

FIRST DOMESTIC.

I am terrified

To look upon him.

SECOND DOMESTIC.

He is smeared and foul
With stains of earth, and foam clings to his lips ;
Clenched are his fists, and, vertical his arms
Working consensive to his heavy tread,
He seems to pound both earth and air.

FIRST DOMESTIC.

Alas !

And is that Saul, our king, our royal master ?

SECOND DOMESTIC.

Austere he always looked, yet always noble ;
But now, abstracted of his manly gait,
And champing at the bridle of the fiend,
He's dreaded than the rank and brindled boar,
Whose sharp, white tusks are draped with liquid gore.
We're safe ; but now I would not be within
Yon chamber where the young musician sits
For a year's wages.

FIRST DOMESTIC.

Thitherward he turns.

He has caught the sound, and due approaches it ;
But whether in dudgeon or in softening temper
I cannot tell. He hesitates on the threshold.

SECOND DOMESTIC.

He 's like the ox that snuffs the slaughter-house
Before it enters.

FIRST DOMESTIC.

He has entered now ;
And may Heaven grant this music may assuage him.

SECOND DOMESTIC.

It either will, or else the more enrage him.
Come let us hence, for we have seen too much.

FIRST DOMESTIC.

Alas the day we ever should see such !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE XII.

A chamber of the palace. DAVID playing on his harp.
SAUL enters and listens, and at length DAVID ceases.

SAUL.

Still more, still more : I feel the demon move
Amidst the gloomy branches of my breast,
As moves a bird that buries itself deeper
Within its nest at stirring of the storm.

(*DAVID plays again.*)

Were ever sounds so sweet!—where am I? O,
 I have been down in hell, but this is heaven!
 It grows yet sweeter,—'t is a wondrous air.
 Methinks I lately died a hideous death,
 And that they buried me accursed and cursing.
 But this is not the grave; for, surely, music
 Comes not t' reanimate man 'neath the clods.
 Let me not think on't! yet a hound fierce tore me.
 Ah, I remember now, too much remember;
 But I am better: still methinks I fainted;
 Or was the whole a fearful, nightmare dream?
 Nay, am I yet not dreaming? No; I wake:
 And, as from dream or as from being born,
 Without the outcry of a mother's travail;
 Or, as if waking from a revery,
 I to myself am ushered by strange music,
 That, in its solemn gentleness, falls on me
 Like a superior's blessing. Give me more
 Of this sweet benefit.

(After having listened again.)

Who is this stranger? Yes, I know him now.
 'T is not a heavenly spirit, though so like one,
 With curving arms encompassing the harp,
 As clasps the landscape the aerial bow:
 It is the minstrel youth from Bethlehem;
 In form, indeed, surpassing beautiful.
 Methinks he doth address himself to sing:
 I'll listen, for I love him as he sits
 Rapt, like a statue conjured from the air.
 Hail!

DAVID *(sings, accompanying himself on his harp).*

O Lord, have mercy on the king;
 The evil spirit from him take;

His soul from its sore suffering
Deliver, for thy goodness' sake.

SAUL (*aside*).

He for me prays.

O, heal thine own Anointed's hurt ;
Let evil from his thoughts be driven ;
And breathe upon his troubled heart
The balmy sense of fault forgiven.

SAUL (*aside*).

I would not hide my faults ; amen.

Great God, thou art within this place ;
The universe is filled with thee :
To all thou givest strength and grace ;
O, give the king thy grace to see.

SAUL (*aside*).

What have I done deserved the loss of grace ?
I cannot say "amen" ; — and if I did,
My feeble amen would be blown away
Before it had reached heaven. I cannot say it :
There disbelief takes prisoner my tongue !

As after winter cometh spring,
May joy unto his soul return ; —
And me, in thy good pleasure, bring
To tend my flock where I was born.

SAUL (*aside*).

So able, yet so humble !

(*Aloud.*) David, no ;

Thou shalt remain and be mine armor-bearer.

What, wouldst thou seek again the idle downs,
'Midst senseless sheep, to spend the listless day,
Watching the doings of thy ewes and rams!
Thou shalt go with me to the martial field
And see great deeds thereon.
Myself will teach thee military lessons ;
To tell the enemy's numbers ; to discover
His vulnerable points ; by stratagem
To draw him from his posts of vantage ; how
Swift to advance ; how to surprise the foe ;
And how to leaven others with thy courage ;
How win from Ammon and the strong Philistine
The double prize of vengeance and renown ;
And how at last to drink triumphantly,
From goblet of victorious return,
The blood-red wine of war.
Meantime, thy lyric pleasures need not end ;
For the fair maidens of the court affect
Music and song. Go now and tell the Queen
All the advantage thou hast been to me.

[Exit DAVI

How potent is the voice of music ! stronger
Even than is a king's command. How oft
In vain have I adjured this demon hence !
O Music, thou art a magician ! Strange,
Most strange, we did not sooner think of thee,
And charm us with thy gentle sorcery.

AHINOAM (*entering, and rushing to his arms*).

My regal Saul ; my dear, recovered lord !

SAUL (*embracing her*).

Kiss me, dear wife, though I am smeared and foul.

AHINOAM.

O no, thou art not foul to me ; no more
Than is the tiger, with his brindling stripes
Foul to his mate, or leopard with his spots,
Or than the kingly lion to his love,
When, with dishevelled and still-lifted mane,
He stalks back from the chase into his den :
Yet come unto your closet with me now,
And cleanse yourself from these degrading stains.

SAUL.

More fair than in thy fairest flush of youth,
Now in thy ripened womanhood, that bears
To me such duteous harvest ! Love, we 'll keep
This shepherd youth at court ; so, if need be,
He may again his wondrous skill display,
And chase the demon as he has to-day.

AHINOAM.

A debt we owe him it were hard to pay.

Exeunt.

SCENE XIII.

Within the palace. Enter an OFFICER and a COURTIER.

COURTIER.

It is most wonderful.

OFFICER.

'T is so indeed :

This youth hath made the King a king again ;
Whose evil term hath day by day grown shorter,

Till 't is no more. Thanks to that noble shepherd,
Who, with the engines of his harp and voice,
Has, since his coming hither, planned and laid
Such heavy siege to this king-entering demon,
That now our master stands erect and sound ;
His royal mind's strong citadel being freed
And purged from evil influence.

COURTIER.

O, great joy
I feel at this deliverance !

OFFICER.

Abner wept,
Nor could restrain his tears for very bliss,
To see his royal cousin look so bravely,
And bear his helm as wont was 'fore the troops,
Who with their myriad tongue-blast rent the sky
And shook the marble base of Gibeah.

COURTIER.

I saw the Queen, too, watch him from her window,
With mingled looks of gladness, pride, and love ; —
Yet wherein some misgiving seemed to lurk
And check her exultation.

OFFICER.

She's discreet
As he is brave ; more thoughtful, and less sanguine
Than he (even as she should be, being woman).

COURTIER.

His Highness Jonathan was at the review.

OFFICER.

Yes ; at the side of his great Sire he moved,
As if he meant preclude all other tendance.

COURTIER.

I marked that circumstance, and from it deemed
The Prince was fearful of a new access,
I' the very midst and presence of the soldiery.
'T was somewhat rash so soon to venture forth ;
Yet very like the King. What age is the moon ?

OFFICER.

I know not ; con the calendar.

COURTIER.

Not now :

I go to attend the Princes and Princesses,
And greet them on the end of their distresses. [*Exit.*

OFFICER.

Ha, ha ! how sudden shoots this bolt of peace !
I wish, my blooming, jaunty sprig of clover,
Your joy may last, and their distress be over.

[*Exit, and enter MALZAH.*

MALZAH.

Music, music hath its sway ;
Music's order I obey :
I have unwound myself at sound
From off Saul's heart, where coiled I lay.
'T is true, awhile I've lost the game ;
Let fate and me divide the blame.
And now away, away ; — but whither,
Whither, meantime, shall I go ?
Erelong I must returned be hither.
There's Jordan, Danube, and the Po,
And Western rivers huge, I know :
There's Ganges, and the Euphrates,
Nilus, and the stretching seas :

There's many a lake and many a glen
 To rest me, as in heaven, again ;
 With Alps, and the Himalayan range : —
 And there's the Desert for a change.
 Whither shall I go ?

I'll sit i' the sky,

And laugh at mortals and at care ;
 (Not soaring, as before, too high,
 And bring upon myself a snare ;)
 But out my motley fancies spin
 Like cobwebs on the yellow air ;
 Laugh bright with joy, or dusky grin
 In changeful mood of seance there.
 The yellow air ! the yellow air !
 He's great who's happy anywhere.

To be the vassals and the slaves of music
 Is weakness that afflicts all heaven-born spirits.
 But touch whom with the murmur of a lute,
 Or swell and fill whom from the harmonious lyre,
 And man may lead them wheresoe'er he wills ;
 And stare to see the nude demoniac
 Sit clothed and void of frenzy. I'll begone,
 And take a posy with me from Saul's garden.

*[Exit ; and soon re-enters, bearing a huge nosegay, and
 thereat snuffing.]*

Shall I fling it in the earth's face, from whence I took it !
 Albeit I've seen, perhaps, flowers as mean in heaven.
 Well, I will think that these are heaven's. Alack,
 This is a poor excuse for asphodel ; —
 And yet it has the true divine aroma.
 Here's ladslove, and the flower which even death
 Cannot unscent, the all-transcending rose.
 Here's gilly-flower, and violets dark as eyes

Of Hebrew maidens. There's convolvulus,
That sickens ere noon and dies ere evening.
Here's monkey's-cap. — Egad! 't would cap a monkey
To say what I have gathered; for I spread my arms
And closed them like two scythes. I have crushed
many;

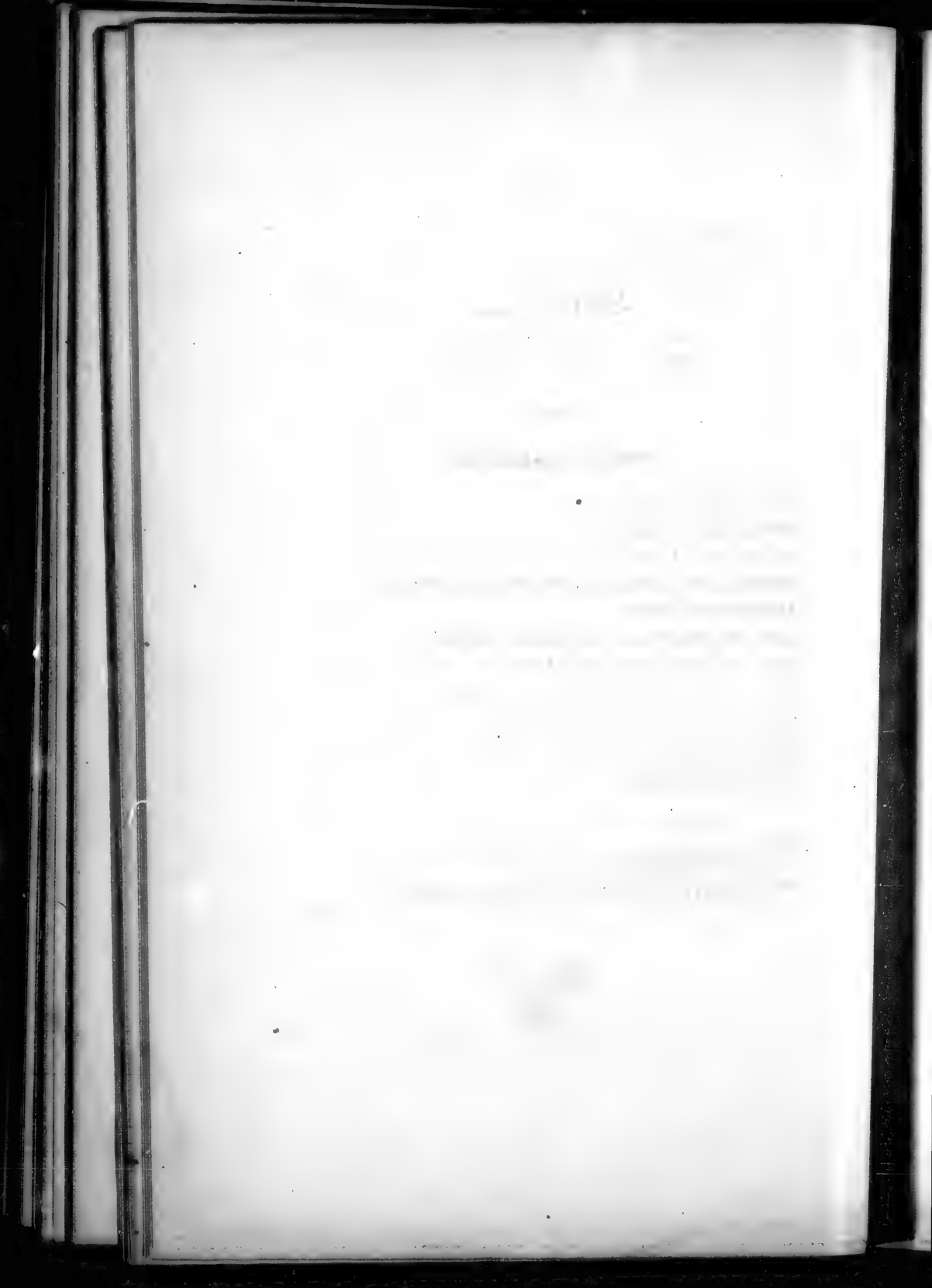
I've sadly mangled my lilies. However, here
Is the august camelia, and here's marigold,
And, as I think, i' the bottom two vast sunflowers.
There are some bluebells, and a pair of foxgloves
(But not of the kind that Samson's foxes wore).
That's mint; and herê is something like a thistle
Wherewith to prick my nose should I grow sleepy.
O, I've not half enumerated them!
Here's that and that, and many trifling things,
Which, had I time, and were i' the vein for scandal,
I could compare to other trifling things,
But shall not. Ah, here's head-hanging-down narcissus,
A true and perfect emblem of myself.
I'll count it my own likeness; and so leave it
For delectation of my radiant mistress,
Who, lieu of keeping watch and ward o'er me,
May keep it over my pale effigy.

(Drops the narcissus.)

I'll hang this matchless rose upon my lips,
And whilst I'm flying will inhale its breath.

[Exit.]





SAUL.

SECOND PART.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

SAUL, *King of Israel.*

JONATHAN, *Saul's Eldest Son.*

ABNER, *Saul's Cousin.*

DAVID, *A Young Shepherd, and afterward King of Israel.*

JESSE, *David's Father.*

ELIAB, SHAMMAH, and AMINADAR, *Brothers of David.*

GOLIATH, *The Philistine Giant.*

JOKIEL, *An Aged Member of the Royal Household.*

JARED, *A Youthful Member of the same.*

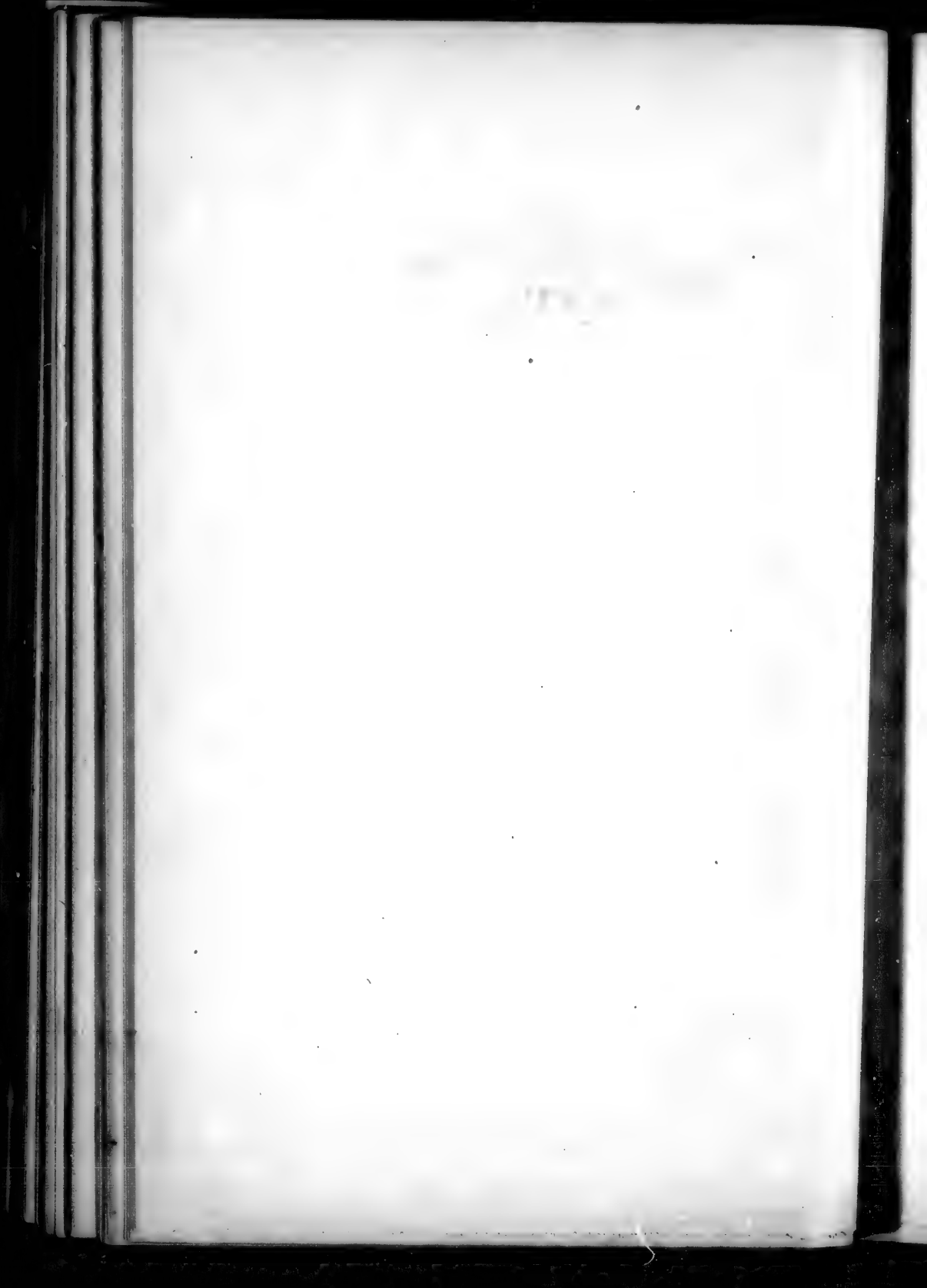
AHINOAM, *Queen of Israel.*

ZELEHTHA, *An Angel.*

ZAPH, }
ZEPHO, } *Demons.*

MALZAH, *The Evil Spirit of the Lord.*

COURTIERS, OFFICERS, SOLDIERS, MAIDENS, &c.





ACT I.

SCENE I.

Gibeah. Interior of the palace. Enter JOKIEL and JARED, the latter having been some time absent.

JARED.

Now that we are at leisure, thou canst tell me,
Somewhat at greater length, how fares our house :
How the clouds float in 'ts sky ; which one looks threat-
ening

What minister in the sea of state affairs,
Or in his own especial bay of office,
Hath struck a rock, or run his craft ashore ;
Who is wrecked forever, who stranded in disgrace,
Who riding now the waves with oar and sail,
And who just foundered. Come ; the King is better.
What next ? How fares the stripling David ?

JOKIEL.

O,
Gone home : he pined for home, and the clear brooks
By Beth-lehem.

SAUL.

JARED.

Thou sayest not so ! he took the King
Vastly.

JOKIEL.

Ay, so he did ; and cowed the Spirit
That did so sore torment him, that, at length,
'T would flee before the opening of the strain,
That was prolonged to charm the royal ears ;
While all the household did suspend its cares,
And post itself on stairs and passages
To banquet on the sounds. — But he is gone.

JARED.

Alas, that he should go ! So brave a youth ! —
So handsome too !

JOKIEL.

He hindered labor.

JARED.

How ?

JOKIEL.

Even from the cellars to the garrets, all
The palace's industrious routine
Worked under a dull clog on every wheel ;
And every operant shuttle of the loom
Would catch and stop midway as he went by it.
He was the song of the fat, smutted slut,
As she knelt scouring (and, with labor, sweating
Into) her greasy kettles ; and the maid
O' the chamber murmured his euphonious name,
As she stroked down the milk-white coverlet ;
While minxes from the town and country near
Came hither, zealous to serve for naught the Queen.
Nor were the ladies of the court much better ;

They scarce concealed their loves ; and antique maids,
 Gazing abstracted, browsed upon his cheeks,
 And drank long at the clear brook of his eyes,
 'Neath some excuse of empty colloquy.
 The youthful damsels I have caught — ha, ha ! —
 Peering from lattice corners at him ; yea,
 Each other pulling thence, that each might view
 The Adolescent, and, with wanton image,
 Tenant the empty chamber of her mind ;
 Or the desire-scorched desert of her soul
 Invade with Ishmaelites of lawless thoughts,
 To rove at leisure o'er her virgin rock,
 And love-unwatered fancy.

JARED.

Ah, poor youth !

Unfortunate in his excess of fortune : —
 An idol kissed away by its adorers.
 Well might he flee to Beth-lehem !

JOKIEL.

Well indeed ;

And well indeed men were not fairer formed,
 Or, by the ark, the world's work had stood still, —
 Yea, the whole garden of our state run wild ;
 Our household flower-beds gone untrimmed, whilst
 women

Had on us hung like bees on honeyed flowers.
 O, they are fond, are fond, — but not of thee.
 This David hath been to us key and mirror
 T' unlock the nature of woman, and to show it
 Uplighted to our eyes.

JARED.

Thou art a cockscomb !

SAUL.

JOKIEL.

Hast thou a weapon that can cut a comb?
Know'st thou that the Philistines are approaching?

JARED.

No.

JOKIEL.

Then I tell thee; and I tell thee, too,
That on to-morrow Saul goes forth to meet them.
I tell thee truth; there's bloodshed now in train,
And, though thou fight not, thou mayest scratch the slain.
Let's go; thou lookest enlightened. — Here Saul comes.
The bee of battle in his ear now hums.

[Exeunt, and enter SAUL.]

SAUL.

Philistia's forth again, and our pale swords
Must blash once more i' the livery of war.
With instant speed we'll meet the foe half-way.
He shall not say that he hath wasted us.
My army from me melt not now away
As at accursed Gilgal. Many a field
Of slaughter hath inured them to death's terror;
They fear not violent end; and discipline,
Combined with stern selection of each man,
Hath made my standing legions thrice the worth
Of raw, unbroken levies. So let come
Again these martial traders of the shore,
To be hurled back as they have been before.

(Enter ABNER.)

ABNER.

Ali's ready for the march.

SAUL.

Then we'll be gone.

Hast parted from thy wife?

SAUL.

175

ABNER.

I have not.

SAUL.

Not

Thy children?

ABNER.

No.

SAUL.

Then do not : like me, go

To this arena of uncertain strife

Without leave-taking or of child or wife ;

For worst of things that may unnerve a man

Is thinking we may never meet again.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A sylvan country. ZAPH seated, and musing, with ZEPHO standing near him.

ZEPHO (*aside*).

My master seems but ill at ease to-day.

ZAPH.

Zepho, —

ZEPHO.

What says my master to his servant ?

ZAPH.

The Jewish king now walks at large and sound,

Yet of our emissary Malzah hear we nothing :

Go now, sweet spirit, and, if need be, seek

This world all over for him : — find him out,

Be he within the bounds of earth and hell.

He is a most erratic spirit, so
May give thee trouble (as I give thee time)
To find him, for he may be now diminished,
And at the bottom of some silken flower,
Wherein, I know, he loves, when evening comes,
To creep, and lie all night, encanopied
Beneath the manifold and scented petals ;
Fancying, he says, he bids the world adieu,
And is again a slumberer in heaven :
Or, in some other vein, perchance thou 'lt find him
Within the walls or dens of some famed city.
Give thou a general search, in open day,
I' the town and country's ample field ; and next
Seek him in dusky cave, and in dim grot ;
And in the shadow of the precipice,
Prone or supine extended motionless ;
Or, in the twilight of o'erhanging leaves,
Swung at the nodding arm of some vast beech.
By moonlight seek him on the mount, at noon
In the translucent waters salt or fresh ;
Or near the dank-marged fountain, or clear well,
Watching the tadpole thrive on suck of venom ;
Or where the brook runs o'er the stones, and smooths
Their green locks with its current's crystal comb.
Seek him in rising vapors, and in clouds
Crimson or dun ; and often on the edge
Of the gray morning and of tawny eve :
Search in the rocky alcove and woody bower ;
And in the crows'-nest look, and into every
Pilgrim-crowd-drawing Idol, wherein he
Is wont to sit in darkness and be worshipped.
If thou shouldst find him not in these, search for him
By the lone melancholy tarns of bitterns ;
And in the embosomed dells, whereunto maidens

Resort to bathe within the tepid pool.
 Look specially there, and, if thou seest peeping
 Satyr or faun, give chase and call out "Malzah!"
 For he shall know thy voice and own to his name.

ZEPHO.

Good; if I catch 't not, call me swift no more.

ZAPH.

Go now, my spirit. [Exit ZEPHO.
 How shall I feed the hungry grudge that gnaws me?
 My machination against Gloriel
 Was all too late: what cares he now for Saul? —
 Ay, or did ever, for the spirits of heaven
 Cannot feel sympathy, since they cannot feel sorrow.
 What shall I do, for pardon lies not in me?
 I will set Malzah upon Samuel,
 Whom, if my spies report to me aright,
 Now Gloriel guards 'gainst Saul with half a legion.
 Never can I forget that angel's scorn,
 And taunt at my despair-wrung moans in hell.
 Naught save revenge can make my sick soul well.

[Exit.

SCENE III.

*The Hebrew camp amongst the hills by the Valley of Elah
 Time, after midnight. Enter SAUL and ABNER.*

SAUL.

Let discipline be strictly kept. Remember,
 Fertile are these Philistines in war's wiles;
 And much experience hath made them apt
 At seizing on advantage. Still our tactics

May trim the balance of positions, which
At present favors them. Thou seest that they
Respect us ; for they dare not leave their heights,
But wait, instead, till we descend from ours.
And, in the open and exposing vale,
Deploy defenceless ; folly none shall see
Till I forget all warlike strategy.

ABNER.

So be it ; we can wait, since all behind
Are ours, and glad to cater to our need :
But, for his food and warlike store, the foe
Must either steal or for them homeward go.

SAUL.

And yet it irks me that I here must stand
And watch your small encounters ; nor the less
Does it arouse my still-impatient blood,
Because beyond they rob us, and this grim
Audacious Giant comes, and, day by day,
Defies us with his challenge, whilst I see
Threat our men's souls sinking ; and at times
I fear some ambushed ill is in delay,
As formerly at Gilgal. We still doubt
Fortune, and, were 't not madness, would assail
Th' Philistine ere the dawning ; for we wait
Not now the inquiring of the Lord. Say, Abner,
Say, art thou not afraid to follow one
Who leads you in his own unaided might.

ABNER.

Sometimes. And yet full many a field we've won
Under thy banners since no sacrifice
Them consecrated, or divine assurance
Gave to our people courage not their own ; --

People, not soldiers ; for thou art the first
Who made in Israel soldiers, and hast bidden
Them follow war, and learn it as a trade.

SAUL.

It is a trade, a terrible trade too !
Whilst, with the ambition of the human soul,
And greediness of the insatiate spirits
Of many, — to say naught of stubborn honor
And stern religion, neither of which can
Allow unto their claims a compromise, —
I see not how the world can well forego it,
At those recurring, violent occasions,
When the distempered bodies politic
Of neighboring states shall to the surface throw
Their evil humors. What is thine opinion ?

ABNER.

'T is scarce for luxury men fight ; neither
Is it for conquest always, nor to throw
Away home tyranny, nor break foreign yoke.

SAUL.

One half the pleasure there is in this world
Seems, unto me, evolved and spun through pain,
E'en as some sweet medicaments and syrups
Through filthy processes arrive distilled.

ABNER.

'T is true this very pang of war brings with it
Delight.

SAUL.

Much, Abner, did I feel that once ;
But now, the buoying wings of novelty,

Shorn down or plucked, together with my spirits
Much maimed by priestly treachery and scorn,
(Yet by that very scorn I 'm strengthened,) now,
When comes heroic war, my blunted mind
Feels little save the pressure of its care ; —
Yet welcome care ; ay, welcome priestly scorn ;
Ay, welcome treachery, which I scorn to fear, —
'T is what I have scorned, and will scorn, to fear :
For what I am, I am because I 've scorned,
Not God, but the haughtiest hierarchy
That ever in its sacerdotal pride
Sought to be paramount amidst the world : —
Moreo'er, these ills now keep me from one greater.

ABNER.

And what is that ?

SAUL.

O, the old malady, —
Devil possession. War while waged abroad
Keeps me in peace at home. Thou understand'st ?
O Abner, Abner, 't is no easy thing
To be demoniac, yet to act the king.

ABNER.

Cousin, I thought that you were quite delivered
From that sad harassment !

SAUL.

I have been charmed
Awhile by music ; and the trumpets' din,
The clang of arms, and all this warlike care,
Divert me : so the fiend now lays not hold
Upon my soul : but, when this war is o'er,
He will return, torment me all the more.

ABNER.

Alas !

SAUL.

Pity me not ; but wonder why
I 'm in that plight that doth provoke thy pity.

ABNER.

Jehovah's ways are dark.

SAUL.

If they be just, I care not.
I can endure till death relieve me, — ay,
And not complain ; but doubt enfeebles me,
And my strong heart, that gladdeth to endure,
Falters 'neath its misgivings, and, vexed, beats
Into the speed of fever, when it thinks
That the Almighty greater is than good.

ABNER.

Beware how thou dost charge the God who made thee !

SAUL.

I did not crave my making ; did not beg
To be a ruler. What I am I am
Perforce : yet would I loyally perform
The work imposed upon me by my Maker
And Samuel ; would faithfully discharge
The functions that, thou knowest, I never sought. —
Lo !
Did I not hide myself amongst the baggage
At Gilgal's great convention, and had need
To be sought out, and, in a manner, dragged
Before His crowded bar, and, there exposed,
Like a proud criminal, to stand confessed,
And be admired for this unusual stature ?
What have I done since then ? what left undone ?
I've sacrificed ; — and had I not apology ?

I spared the king of Amalek ; and Samuel
Denouncing came, and in high umbrage slew him.

ABNER.

Samuel ne'er looked less like himself than then.

SAUL.

He did become an executioner. O,
I could have run between him and the blade
That did make ready the poor, fainting king
For the shambles !

ABNER.

Yet 't was retribution.

SAUL.

Pshaw !

ABNER.

He had made women childless, Samuel said ;
So should his mother childless be 'mongst women.

SAUL.

Have we not all, who draw the sword, so done ?
Shall not Philistia's mothers curse again,
Erelong, our arms that shall bereave them ? Shall
Not Israel's matrons do the like, and howl
By hill and valley their young darlings slain ?
Thrice helm thy head ; for soon will at it beat
Such storm of curses, both from sires and mothers,
As thou hast never seen its counterpart,
Not e'en when darts flew at thee thick as hail.
'T was retribution ? — O, no more of that ;
Or the great ghost of Amalek will rise,
And stand before us with grim-eyed rebuke. —
But wherefore this ? Now to the left, and I
Will take the right, see to 't our sentries walk,
And take no sleep, ensconced in cosy crannies ;
And snoring bass to dream-tuned symphonies,

And strains engendered by the mountain winds.
Good night.

ABNER.

Good night. A storm seems nigh at hand,
Will scarce allow our weariest guards to doze ;
Even those of them who've learned to keep their watch
A-walking, but not waking.

SAUL.

'Midst these hills
The air is fitful, as, in highest circle, —
Be Samuel's denunciation sooth, —
Would seem to be the favor. But thou knowest
That the uncarepricked hind and careless soldier
Will sleep while thunderpeals shake up the world,
And earthquakes 'neath them yawn, until they topple
Into the chasm, still nodding, or until,
Regardless of the voice o' the watchman, thunder,
The hurrying lightning wakens them in Hades.

ABNER.

The wind awakens.

SAUL.

And the sky grows blacker.

ABNER.

Again, good night.

SAUL.

Good night to thee again.

[Exit ABNER.]

Now let there be a curfew in the air,
Ye stars that are the shining hearths of heaven.
Down, gust, down, down : why comest thou thus flap-
ping,

Like an enanard spirit in my mantle ?
Disclose me not ; this business nor requires
Far-warning gusts nor eye-directing fires.

[Exit SAUL.]



ACT II.

SCENE I.

The country near Beth-lehem. DAVID tending his flock.

DAVID (*sings*).

Father, father, let me go
To the battle-field !
Why should I not strike the foe?
Why should I not weapons wield?
Why may I not bear the shield,
Draw the fatal bow ?

(*Enter JESSE.*)

JESSE.

Son, cease to long for danger.

DAVID.

Listen, father ;

(*And be not angry with me ;*) are our days
Not numbered for us ? It would seem to me,
The field of battle is as safe a place
As is this peaceful and secluded mead,
Where naught more hurtful comes than tooth of sheep,
Or hoof of ox, or heedless tread of men,
Fatal to flowers.

JESSE.

These are mysterious themes. —

But whether this unhazardous quiet mead
Be even as the noisy, crowded scene
O'er which war-chariots drive, or not, be sure,
War is not man's true trade. To till the soil,
Excel in arts, not arms, and unto all
To do the deeds of love and charity
In fear of God, are our whole duty : these
Do and thou shalt be happy : every other
Pleasure but ends in pain. Know, he whose hand
Is red with human blood must not approach
Jehova's nearly, — a plain evidence
Of war's essential evil. Wouldst thou wish
In youth to play the slayer? Lo, the day
That dawns blood-red matures in wind, and fades
'Midst drizzling rains spread o'er the gloomy west,
Or goes 'fore lightning bellowing down the darkness,
A warning for all morrows : — hence, do thou
Extinguish this red spark that may consume thee,
And far from violence live content. As day
Now fails serene, so doth the Peaceful's life.
Moreover, have I not three sons already
(Surely sufficient for one parent's part!)
Assisting Saul to drive back the invader?
Then wherefore should I offer thee, as yet
Uncalled for by his terrible conscription? —
Thou but a stripling too ; thy brethren, men.
But be content ; for thou shalt start to-morrow
Full early for the camp, and take them something,
And thence return with tidings of their fare.

DAVID.

I thank you for thus granting half my wish.

[Exit JESSE.]



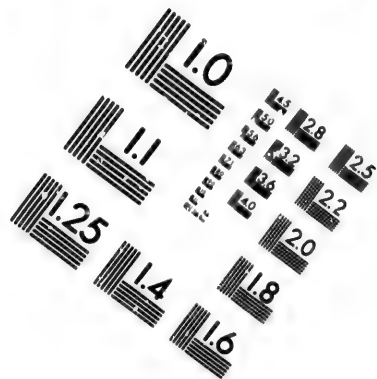
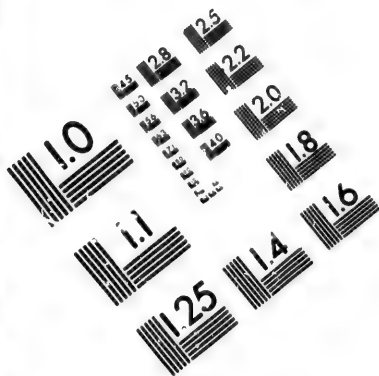
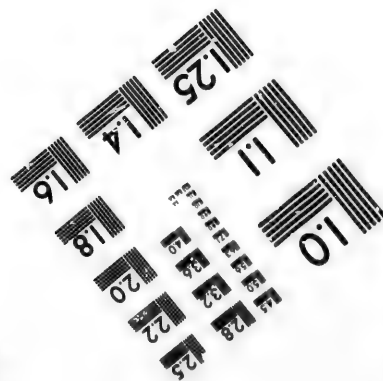
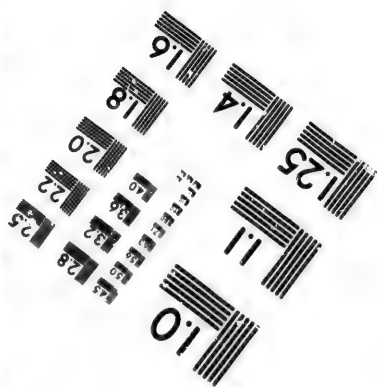
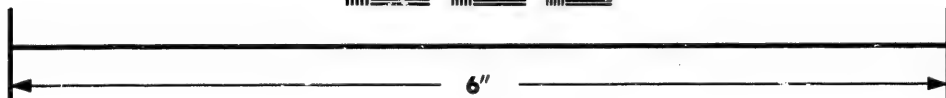
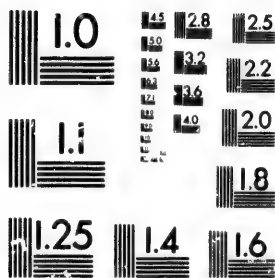


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As a coiled cane, when suddenly unloosed,
Rebounding, quivers, throbs my heart with joy.
O night, be brief that keeps from me the morn !
I long, anticipating, to be gone.
To go is well ; to stay there would seem better.
I'll even now my flock lead toward its fold. —
How light the heart whose weight is from it rolled !
[Exit.

SCENE II.

The Hebrew camp overlooking the valley of Elah.

SAUL (*entering*).

No surer sign have we of deep respect,
Than when our enemies, all mannerly,
Preserve their distance ; for 't is surely true,
Familiarity not only breeds,
But manifests contempt. They still their tops
Of vantage keep, nor half-way in the vale
Invite us to shake hands. How different once !
Now are we at a balance in the scales,
And this great issue shall determine soon
Which of us kicks the beam. Their giant still
To insult us comes ; but he's a harlot merely,
Sent out before them to decoy us down
Into the bottoms, whither, if we venture,
They doubtlessly intend, full fledged, to swoop
And terribly embrace us.

(*A noise heard.*)

There he bellows,
With voice like a loud gong's, his proud defiance.
Why do my officers oppose me, when

I seek to meet this bully? for it seems
As if his challenge were alone for me,
Who, though not his, am of gigantic mould.
Perchance I honor this event too much ;
Yet dear would to me as a victory
This braggart giant's demolition be.
There is no mettle left in Israel
Or 't were not thus. I grow impatient : — come,
Soon giant slain or battle's general slaughter ;
Come, victory won, or come loss of my daughter.

[Exit, and enter Hebrew SOLDIERS.]

FIRST SOLDIER.

Goliath is forth again ! come on and look.
By heaven, he groweth bigger every day,
His voice more thunder-like. Gaze down amidst
The valley, and behold him, in his mail,
Move like a fulgent cloud.

SECOND SOLDIER.

Does one with a shield
Precede him ?

FIRST SOLDIER.

Yes, and looks no bigger than
A child, compared with him. Harken again :
This is the second time to-day. Attend.

SECOND SOLDIER.

Not I ; I'm weary of his insult, that
For forty days hath now continued thus.

THIRD SOLDIER.

O, might some Samson pull him to the ground !

SECOND SOLDIER.

What, wouldst thou have the land shake with his fall!
For it would be as though an armed tower
Were toppled to the dust.

FOURTH SOLDIER.

O, shame to us!
Is there, then, no one who can with him cope? —
None in our army dare accept the duel?

THIRD SOLDIER.

None dare except the King, and all the host
Excepteth him from entering the lists.
'T is said he with his cousin Abner quarrelled
Because he did resist him unto force;
Holding him when he would have straight gone down
Into the valley to the huge Philistine.

FIFTH SOLDIER.

It was a madness in the King to think
Contend with one, excelling him e'en more,
In size and strength, than he therein doth others.

THIRD SOLDIER.

And yet he would have done it; and now says,
Whoe'er shall kill the giant he'll enrich,
And give his daughter unto him in marriage,
And make his kindred free.

SECOND SOLDIER.

His Majesty
May spare his wondrous bounty, since the giant's
Mien will prevent all comers, for he looks
'Terrific thus far off. His threatenings boom
Up hither like to fearful prophecies,

And do dishearten all our host, which now
Thinks the most mean Philistine thing of terror.
Why go we to the brink to again behold
This show, which doth but show to us our shame!

(Enter ELIAB, ABINADAB, and SHAMMAH, three of David's brothers.)

SHAMMAH.

O, to have hither come but this to see!

ELIAB.

See who comes here, who should now tend his sheep.

(Enter DAVID, and a Hebrew SOLDIER, named JOB.)

JOB.

Yonder thy brethren stand.

DAVID.

What troubles them?—

But I shall quickly learn. This war, I see,
Hath taught their visages to wear a frown.

(Advancing eagerly towards them.)

O brethren dear, well-timed do I arrive
To see both you and the impending fight!—
But not thus empty come I, as may seem:
For I have left behind me, at the trench,
Provision for you from our careful sire,
Who sends me to the camp to learn your fare.
How goes it with you? how succeeds the war?—
But you are downcast? Wherefore are you silent?
Why in your eyes upkindles no fierce joy
At coming on of battle? Why recoil
Our outposts yonder? See how they withdraw.

Fear sits upon their faces, and they cast
Behind them glances, as if towards them came
Some slow-pursuing, half-disdainful monster. —
O monstrous sight ! Say, brothers, say, what image,
What shape, or what conception, can compel
Those warriors of Israel thus to flee.

SHAMMAH.

Peace, prattler.

AMINADAB.

Truant, stay thy tongue.

ELIAB.

Retire.

SHAMMAH.

The monster is retiring.

AMINADAB.

Then we 'll go
And eat our dinner. Let him mind, or yet
We will eat him, the uncircumciséd sinner.

ELIAB.

Stay ! for he turns again in rage and scorn,
And flings his challenge loud upon the wind.

SHAMMAH.

Then let the wind it answer ; what care we ?
Can caring crop a cubit from his stature ?

DAVID.

Of whom thus speak they ?

JOB.

Of a giant, whom,
When thou 'rt returned unto Beth-lehem's maids,

Thou mayst declare to them that thou hast seen,
And say what grim foes soldiers do encounter.
Goliath is his name, and forth he comes,
Each day, to stalk like horror in the vale.
He is so tall he'd reach thee from a tree,
And stronger he than a rhinoceros ;
Nor looks the hyena or the wolf more cruel.
He surely must have been begot in blood, —
Some ever-angry tigress suckled him ;
For when he looks about him, unaroused,
So fierce and fiery is his gaze, his eyes
Are like unto a turret's windows, which,
While flaming fagots crackle on the hearth,
Glare with reflection of the ruddy light
That dances on the walls. — None dare approach him.
Listen, and tell me what thou think'st thou hearest.
For what thou 'lt hear will not appear like man's :
Indeed, 't is said, no woman gave him birth ;
But that a sea-squall bore him, and the big
And billow-breasting Dagon was his father.

DAVID.

I hear a sound like that of distant thunder.

JOB.

A thunderer he is ; and his huge mail,
Whene'er he moveth, is a heaven of lightnings.
Listen again and tell me what 's the tune.

DAVID.

'T is lower, and upcometh with a sound
Like the weak moan of overwearied bees.

JOB.

'T is said he eats a beeve each day to dinner.

DAVID.

But now 't is swelling like the noise of torrents,
Even as I have often stood and heard them,
When, swollen with rain, they've down the gullies gal-
loped
To plunge themselves in Jordan.

JOB.

How is 't now?

DAVID.

Dying away, like the receding wheels
Of chariots o'er the valley. Let me see
This giant: come, and show me him near hand.

JOB.

Not nearer than this top: — I dare not venture
Upon the crags, lest, chancing topple from them,
He should devour me, as a wild beast would
A tame one in its den.

DAVID.

Art thou so faint?

JOB.

All faint before him; for, where'er he comes,
Our men from thence retire. — I wonder thou,
Even at Beth-lehem, hadst not heard of him;
For he this forty days hath challenged Israel,
To send him down her champion. Again
He is defying us.

GOLIATH (*down in the valley*).

Away with you,

You pale, retreating cowards. Hear me now.
Why do you set your battle in array?
Am I not a Philistine? Are not you

Soldiers of Saul? Bring here a man to fight me ;
And if he kill me, then will we serve you ;
Should I kill him, then you shall serve Philistia.

DAVID.

What says the King to this?

JOB.

He doth declare that whosoe'er shall slay
This proud, insulting creature he 'll enrich ;
Give unto him his daughter, too, in marriage,
And make his family free. — But who 'd descend
For riches, wife, or freedom to the dead?

DAVID.

O, dead to all, to freedom dead indeed,
When fear of death commends to shameful life,
And Dagon dares the God of Israel!
O Israel, where is thy valor! Then
Has none yet offered move from us this shame?
For what is this uncircumcised one,
That he for forty days hath been allowed
Defy the army of the Living God!
Eliab, why dost seem to stand appalled,
Thou and thy brethren, and the host of Saul?

ELIAB (*roughly*).

Why art thou come down hither? and with whom
Hast left in the wilderness yonder those few sheep?
I know thy vanity and carelessness ;
Thou art come hither but to see the fight.

DAVID.

To see the fight I come not ; but see thee! —
But who knows what he cometh forth to do?

Who can, at parting, picture his return ?
The way to war starts from the path of peace,
As I so lately leaving Beth-lehem —
Perchance for purpose that I did not know —
To conquer this grim creature have come here.
Nay, do not threaten me with that fierce frown.
Why shouldst thou scowl upon me ? Smooth thy brow.
Do I offend thee with my presence ? or have I
Spoken indignantly without a cause ?
To fight with this Philistine I am willing ;
And let the King straight know it.

FIFTH SOLDIER.

My brave youth,
Thy words are folly's. Why, our stoutest soldiers
Shrink from him : he would trample thee to death ;
Yea, crush thee as a beetle 'neath his feet.

DAVID.

He cannot crush him whom the Lord upholds.
Will no one tell the King what I have said ?
None take me to his tent ? (*Laughter.*)

THIRD SOLDIER.

I 'll take thee, boy ;
But fear he 'll think thou comest to insult him.
[Exit along with DAVID.]

FIRST SOLDIER.

This is the very stripling that at court,
With harpen strains, allayed the King's distemper.

SECOND SOLDIER.

Nay, he has caught it ; he is mad : — come on !
Come on, come on ! all ye who love a joke.
[Exeunt all the SOLDIERS.]

ELIAB.

Now shall we be the scoff of Beth-lehem !
Why has my old, fond father let him come ?
Let 's go and see him now dismissed ashamed.

AMINADAB.

For this our foolish father should be blamed.

SHAMMAH.

Grieve not : Saul will not send him ; and our dauntless
David, by this fond freak, — howe'er it end, —
Will have his saucy, soaring spirit tamed.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

Interior of the royal tent. SAUL seated, with OFFICERS about him. Enter ABNER, leading DAVID.

ABNER.

Your Majesty, behold your servant David ;
The same who, with his harp's mild ministration,
Did exorcise your spirit's gloomy rage,
And purge to cheerful health your dull-eyed grief.
You know him not ; look on him, for 't is he.

SAUL.

I know him now : he's changed. Come near me, David.

(*DAVID advances, and the KING takes him by the hand.*)

My soother, my young friend, my shepherd boy,
Who drew me from the witchery of the moon,
How hast thou fared since I beheld thee last ?
Thy father, is he well ? thy mother too ?

Did she not weep when thou departedst from her,
And flung away the crook to grasp the sword ?
Now is the time to be a soldier : art
Thou come for that, or, with thy suasive harp,
To turn our warfare's dissonance to chords ?
Harsh is the music of these days of force,
And rough as is their labor. The loud bugle,
And the hard-rolling drum, and clashing cymbals,
Now reign the lords o' the air. These crises, David,
Bring with them their own music, as do storms
Their hunders, — no inspiring hymn, no psalm,
The handmaid to devotion ; no winged fugue,
No song, no merry catch, no madrigal ;
No tender strophe, nor solemn canon ; — but
The sharp alarm, the call to boot and saddle,
The big hurrah o' the onset, and the irregular
Chorus on the fire-spitting steel ; all of them sounds
Rousing to the already bated spirit,
But to nice ears offensive. Thou dost see
We have no time at present for vagaries,
Nor leisure for soul sickness : — but inform us
What brings thee from thy native Beth-lehem.
If thou wouldst be a soldier, thou art welcome :
Yea, whatsoever be thy wish or errand,
Peace and my heart's best favor be upon thee.

DAVID.

The kindness of your Majesty o'ercomes me,
Piled upon memories of your former goodness
My gratitude is greater than my words,
Then let a deed more eloquent speak for me.
Vouchsafe unto me yet one favor more ;
That, like a gamester, staking it, I may
Win, of one whom you hate, so great a sum,

That I may you in some small part repay,
In coin of service, and yet owe you more,
Of love and gratitude, than now I do.
Grant I may cope with this vain giant, who,
With haughty challenge, puts your host to shame.

SAUL.

My ardent, fond, uncalculating boy,
Thou know'st not what thou ask'st. His breath alone
Would sweep thee from his path : he would disdain thee,
As doth the lion carrion disdain ;
He would not fence with thee, but on thee seize,
And crumple up thy tender frame like paper ;
Or lift thee with the engine of his arms,
And on the ground, close to his mail-clad feet,
Dash out thy brains. — No, no ; thy father never
Shall say that we to slaughter sent his son.

DAVID.

Yet hear me speak.

SAUL.

Thou speak'st not wisely, David.

He with his spear, so like a weaver's beam,
Would stop the dancing shuttle of thy life.
Nay, stand not thus imploring with thine eye :
To send thee doomed forth to contend with him,
The fatal mockery 'd ever on my conscience
Sit waste with grief, and dash my happiest moments ;
Yea, ghastly, gibber to me in my sleep,
That I had murdered thee. My strongest captains
Dare not encounter him ; then dream not thou
To kill him, or to bring him to me bound ;
Thou but a stripling uninured to arms,

Whilst he is more than man, and has been trained
Up from his youth to do heroic deeds.

DAVID.

Your gracious Majesty, forgive me, but,
Thus kneeling, I must urge my suit. O, hear me !
You know me not yet fully, deeming me
Only prevailing with the harp and crook ;
Yet once, when I my father's sheep was keeping,
There came a lion from the wilderness,
And unawares took from my flock a lamb,
Which, soon as I perceived, I chased the robber,
And the lamb rescued from his jaws ; and when
He turned on me, I seized him by the beard
And killed him : I have also slain a bear ;
And the Philistine soon shall be like them.
Fear not for me, your Majesty ; I know
The Lord who saved me from those savage beasts
Will likewise from this giant.

SAUL.

But, my child,
The lion and the bear were but as kids
Compared with this Philistine !

DAVID.

It was God
Who made the strength of each as nothing to me ;
Who made the lion's armed, distended jaws,
And shaggy throat, but fatal to himself ;
For 'twas thereby I caught him, and him pressed
In such an irresistible embrace,
That soon he rolled his dull, protruding eyes,
And fixed them upwards on my face in death.

SAUL.

Go, go ; and may God too go with thee ; but
I trow that I shall see thy face no more !
He who assisted thee to do these deeds
May thee assist to do one greater. Go ;
I shall await the issue here in horror.
Abner, wilt see him clothed with mine own armor ?

[Exit ABNER and DAVID.]

(*Aside.*) My heart misgives me. 'T is not yet too late ; —
But what if Heaven have sent him ? He shall go.

(*Aloud.*) Now each retire to solitude and pray
For that heroic boy. He who no faith
Has got to wing and plume his dart of prayer,
May groan a low petition, that some angel,
Walking the earth, may shoot it unto heaven.
At once let's separate, and wait the event,
Each in the company of his own suspense.

[Exeunt the OFFICERS.]

I'm full of thoughts that will not now be uttered.

[Disappears in the shadow of the tent.]

SCENE IV.

A part of the camp near the royal tent. A SENTINEL pacing.

Enter Hebrew SOLDIERS.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Is he retired yet ?

SENTINEL.

Who ?

FIRST SOLDIER.

The giant.

SENTINEL.

No.

He's seated on the ground ; and as a tawny
Lion, just waked, and weltering in night's dew,
Shines in the morning's beam, so he in noon's.
Why does he not return ?

FIRST SOLDIER.

Because he smells

The prey.

SENTINEL.

What prey ?

FIRST SOLDIER.

A youth of Beth-lehem,

Who goes to him to be killed.

SENTINEL.

What dost thou mean ?

FIRST SOLDIER.

I mean just as I say, — a Beth-lehem boy,
A crazy lad, who goes to him to be killed.
The King put on him his own armor ; but
It was too large and heavy for him, so,
Naked and armed with but a sling he goes,
And stones from yonder brook.

SENTINEL.

Was ever such

A duel ?

SECOND SOLDIER.

See, our serried soldiers stand
Breathless and fixed like statues, or as woods
Sleeping in the brief calm before the storm.
Our champion is hidden, but he winds

Adown the steep hillside, for thither turn
 The giant's angry eyes. Lo, how he watches !
 And now he rises up ; — and now again
 He's seated : — hearken ! he is calling on
 His visitor.

THIRD SOLDIER.

Alas, he'll visit us
 No more ! The king is much to blame in this ; —
 To let a stripling go where powerful men
 Declined to venture. — Listen how the giant
 Growls, less in rage than in his disappointment
 At such a trifling quarry.

*(Enter a second party of SOLDIERS, one after another, and in a
 riotous manner.)*

FIRST SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

For us room !

We're coming to see the races.

A SOLDIER OF THE FIRST PARTY.

Fool, what races ?

FIRST SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

Why, 'twixt the giant and a shepherd boy :
 The boy will run, and the giant after him ;
 And that's a race, if both be in good earnest.

SECOND SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

A race ? To be sure ; a very dashing race :
 Where is my little Three-to-one ? Who bets
 With me ? Who wagers with me that the shepherd
 Will not take three strides to the giant's one ?

SENTINEL.

How canst thou jest at such a time as this,
 When yon brave youth thus marches to his end ?

SECOND SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

I know the fool is going to be eaten
(Unless we are indeed to have a race).
Well, he'll eat tender, with but little cooking :
He might as well at once himself surrender,
And stand before the mailed giant in the sun,
And so in his reflected beam be cooked.
Gad ! but the giant must walk round him then,
For who the devil dare stand to turn the spit ?

SENTINEL.

May devils turn thee on their spit beneath,
And at thy cries no fiend make intercession !

SECOND SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

I'll call on thee : I know thou 'lt be in hearing.

A SOLDIER OF THE FIRST PARTY.

Hear how the Gath-hound growls because the King
Hath flung before his paws so small a bone.

GOLIATH (*down in the valley*).

Is this, then, Israel's champion ! Ha, ha, ha !
Blast him, ye Wind-gods, and ye Powers who waft
Phoenicia's fleets : a murrain blow for me
Upon this whelp. Lame him, ye thunderbolts,
That rend our masts ; and through his entrails pour
Wherewith is snapped our rigging. Shall I touch him
With arms that are the semblance of the gods' ?
Bring me an arrow of some babe of Gath !
Audacious trespasser, begone ; avaunt !
Am I a dog, that thus thou com'st with staves ?
May Dagon smite thee, spawn of some low churl !
Thou cattle-driver, back, and get thee gored
To death by thine own herd. No nearer me ;

Presume no farther ; dost thou hear me, boy ?
Back to thy king, and bid him come himself,
Or send a man to meet me. Now, by my gods,
Where have they found this dumb, approaching fool ?
Hear me, thou thoughtless idiot ; thou young
And listless strayer, get from these dread bounds,
O'er which, to every Hebrew, I have hung
Death's bloody banner. Still approaching ? Then
I'll let thee walk beneath destruction's archway,
Into the vaulted and sepulchral den
Where lie all thy forerunners. Come, boy, come ;
Come unto me, and, with my naked hands,
I joint from joint will rend thee, and thy flesh
Give to the birds and beasts to be their food.

SENTINEL.

May Heaven forefend !

SECOND SOLDIER.

Hist, for the shepherd's answering.

DAVID (*heard*).

O boastful giant, impious son of Gath,
Trust not too much in thy prodigious strength ;
Nor in thine armor, that, till now, has been
Invulnerable unto mortal dint :
Nor scorn me for my youth and seeming weakness.
Complete in arms and covered o'er with mail,
Thou com'st to me ; but I come unto thee
In name of Him who is the Lord of Hosts,
The God of Israel's armies, whom thou hast
Defied. He will deliver thee this day
Into my hand ; and I will take from thee
Thy head, and give your army's carcasses

To the wild beasts and birds, that all may know
There is indeed a God in Israel,
And that this is his battle.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Bravo, boy !

SENTINEL.

See ; now the monster rises in his rage.

SECOND SOLDIER.

He needs not stride so ; for the youth retreats not.

SENTINEL.

Now let us all send prayer apace to Heaven,
Cry loudly for our country's champion.

SECOND SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

I pray that he may now begin the race.
I came to see a very dashing race,
But, if the shepherd not bestir himself,
I shall see but his silly brains dashed out.

THIRD SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

See how the giant's nostrils puff forth vapor.

FIRST SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

Ay, it is well the giant gives some warning :
The shepherd's waking, for he smells the morning.

SECOND SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

The shepherd's now got one hand out of bed ;
Will he with the other, think'st thou, scratch his head ?

FIRST SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

I think his very ears lie back with fright.

SECOND SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

He fancies some one's robbed him in the night:
I see he does misdoubt his very garments,
For he is groping in them.

FIRST SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

'T is his scrip:
Some small coin thence may have given him the slip.

SECOND SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

I hope not; for a stone's a serious thing,
When all one has are stones and one poor sling.

A SOLDIER OF THE FIRST PARTY.

With the giant's sword his blood will soon be spilt!

FIRST SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

Nonsense! he'll but get pummelled with the hilt.
See, see! he runs to meet his foul-mouthed foe.

A SOLDIER OF FIRST PARTY.

O, murder foul must be the coming deed!
Nay, 't is a sight too sad to look upon,
Rushing right into gaping ruin's jaws!—
Ay, whirl thy sling, poor wretch,—ay, leap along,
A-toward Death's fist, like to a bounding ball!

FIRST SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

No, not at ball, no, not at ball he's playing:
He means to play at leapfrog with the giant.
See how he vaults. Ha, ha! I've seen a cat
Go skipping over red-hot burning bricks,
A cat go skipping o'er hot limekiln stones,
And stones sent skipping o'er a frozen pool;

But never saw a cat in Hebrewdom,
Nor stone o'er pool, appear more capersome.

SENTINEL.

Now may the stone be under God's great guidance !

ALL.

Amen !

SENTINEL.

Behold ! the giant reels ! he falls !—
O, let us fall too ; fall upon our knees !
We thank thee, Lord, we thank thee, Israel's God !

FIRST SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

I had no time to ejaculate, amen :
But now, amen, though murmured in amazement.

SECOND SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

Astonishment hath stunned me ! No 't is not
My jest-preceded prayer that 's answered thus.
Unto this tune I 've been but discord. Comrade,
That stone hit me too when it struck the giant.

A SOLDIER.

Say not again that aught is strange : for now,
Now shall the sparrow pierce the eagle !

ANOTHER SOLDIER.

Now

The infant put to flight the arméd man.

SENTINEL.

O, what are arms, when turned aside by God ;
What are they not, when in God-guided hands !
This is the doing of Jehovah's arm ;
Yon shepherd is his angel, fair yet dread.

A SOLDIER.

He is a skyey cherub.

(A great shout heard.)

Hark! the sky
Is rent: the army shouts with might and main
At the great spectacle of the giant slain.
Let us assist them, and upsend a blast,
That, from this earth reverberating driven,
Shall waken whirlwinds on the fields of heaven.

(They all cheer.)

ANOTHER SOLDIER.

Thus ends this bugbear that, for forty days,
Has kept us in shame's vexing wilderness.

ANOTHER SOLDIER.

Surely the days of miracles return!
For who had counted that this youth could sling
A pebble through that cincture of thick brass?

SECOND SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

None could have done it but that cat-o'-mountain.
See how he's mounted on the giant's body.
O, most indomitable, nut-cracking shepherd,
He has cracked the giant's nut, and, lo, upon him
He stands, with the Big-one's well-begotten sword,
Going to extract his kernel.

FIRST SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

Ah, thou wag,
The season of thy seriousness is brief,
Like summer on the top of Lebanon.
Thou wilt be grave when in the grave; — when Death
Hath laid thee as the shepherd's laid the giant.

(Another great shout heard.)

SENTINEL.

Again the army shouts, and now, behold !
The nimble shepherd, like swift-footed Death,
Is standing on the carcass of the giant,
That lies like one of their own stranded hulls,
While the rude blows of his own scymitar
Assail him ; as the yet stout, lashing storm
Beats on the wreck that shall no more go seaward.

A SOLDIER.

His head is off ; and that same tongue of his,
That long hath uttered threats too great for mortals,
Shall brag no more forever. Silently he died ;
Or the great groan with which his savage spirit
Left the huge body, was o'erwhelmed and drowned
In the clangor of his falling.

SECOND SOLDIER OF SECOND PARTY.

Little thanks :

He surely made quite noise enough when living ;
For not a man hath heard his proper tongue
For half the livelong day this month or more ;
Either by reason of the giant's brawling,
Or brawls concerning him amongst ourselves.
I would as lief live near the boiling ocean,
Or in the neighborhood of a cataract,
Ay, or in hearing of a brace of mothers
From morn till evening chiding o'er their brats,
As be compelled again to let my ears
Be made the thoroughfares unto his bluster.
I always hate a man whose voice is loud ;
I hate a man whose mien's imperious, —
Despise the soul that stalks in panoply ;

And would much rather meet a ghost by night
Than see, a mile off, one of those by day.
I always did suspect, when I beheld
Such men approaching cap-a-pie, that they
Were cowards or else bullies; and this giant
Hath in this guess confirmed me. Break his bones!
Three several times have I been nigh to choking,
From being startled, when in earnest dining,
With sound like to a coming avalanche,
When it has only been his Ugliness,
Vomiting insolence upon our host,
As he descended down yon mountain's side.
The heedless hound! Our forces have grown lean
From being stayed by him amidst their meals;
Him whose main use was only to devour,
And eat us up like a huge caterpillar,
And spread a locust famine o'er the land,
On which like a huge locust now he lies.
Why did he not lie there a month ago?
I do assert that we have been abused;
I say this giant was a mere marsh-fire,
A bugaboo, a come-up-salt-flood meteor,
A down-fallen comet, a hither-shotten star,
A mere mock-sun, a thing as false as moonshine;
In short, a mere audacious will-o'-wisp,
A mere innocuous, polished jack-o'-lantern.

SENTINEL.

How easy seems the deed when once 't is done!—
Peace, and prepare thee for the coming fray:
It grows yet louder;—'t is its thunder's bray.
(A shout much greater than before, and mingled with alarums.)
Hear, the clashed cymbals, and the rattling drum,
With the imperious trumpet, bid us come

To arms ; and, dolefully, a murmuring wail
From Ephis-dammim sweeps across the vale.
Come Saul and Abner hast'ning ; let 's away.
Yon sun will set upon a bloody day.

[Exeunt ; and enter the KING and ABNER rapidly, the former speaking.]

SAUL.

Now that their hearts are up, lead down thy men
Into the vale, which soon shall roll in blood ;
Unless the foe, astonished and alarmed,
Shall keep their heights, which, if they do, we 'll storm,
In spite of storm of rolling stones and darts,
And drive them homewards, should they turn their
backs ;
If not, provoked and hurried to yon brink,
The sweeping yawn shall be to them their grave.

ABNER.

I never saw our army's heart so swell.
I do believe (such ecstasy has risen)
That they this hour would strive to carry hell,
And, sacrilegious, storm the heights of heaven. *[Exit.]*

SAUL.

Too much reflection would arrest the world.
Why should we not attack them ? We 'll go down
Into the perilous vale.

(Another great shout heard.)

The changeful souls !

Because one man appeared whom no one man
Dared cope with, why, forsooth, more than a month
They stood immovable as stupid stocks : —
Now, when that one man 's dead, and, by a youth,

Before their eyes, shown to be vulnerable,
There is no holding them ; but they must rush
Pell-mell into the dangerous vale, and thence
Mount, all disordered, up the adverse steep,
Nor wait for their commanders. I have known,
Ere this, a mere chimera stop brave men
As might a wall of brass, when, to their ardor
Unchecked by fear, realities were less
Than viewless fences of swift-yielding air.

[Exit ; the noise of the army increases, and then dies away.]

SCENE V.

Within sight of Ekron. Time, evening of the same day.

SAUL (*entering, and sheathing his sword*).

There, take thine insult back, thou proud Philistia ;
Take it through Ekron's gates, besmeared and bloody.
Art thou not satisfied ? Art restless yet ?
Come to the field again of Ephs-dammim,
For thou mayst easily find it by the clew
Of thine own dead and wounded. Lo, they stretch
Hence to the tented field, and all the road
Is rendered vocal by their sore distress.

(Enter ABNER.)

Brave Abner, my true cousin !

ABNER.

Is my liege

Unhurt ? Is whole my great Commander ? O,
Too rash this day hath been my kinsman Saul.
Thou far too reckless of thy life hast been,
And, with unwarrantable hardihood,

From the meridian till eve hast sought
The hottest fight, and over Israel's borders
Hurried the obsequious war, that did so lately
Sit heavy at her heart.

SAUL.

O'er Elah's vale
Too long the bold Sea-Eagle brooding sat.

ABNER.

But suddenly it rose, pierced with one arrow,
That was the prelude to a myriad others
Which fatally o'ertook it. Cousin, cousin,
Victory still rests upon our house ; or, rather,
Is thither wafted from the sky by some
Vicarious angel, who, in Samuel's stead,
Conducts her down and gives her to thy hand,
Still to assure thee of the doubted throne.
Fear not henceforward, my anointed sovereign.

SAUL.

Fear not for me ; my faithful captain, fear not ;
But let the signal blast be loudly blown
That calls our wearied men from the pursuit.

[Exit ABNER.]

I'll still extinguish fears, as men young fires
Extinguish, e'en by stifling them ; for fears,
Like fires, are things which are, yet should not be,
Amongst the ills that light on honest men.

[Exit ; and the recall begins to sound, and soldiers pass
over the stage with appearance of great fatigue.]

FIRST SOLDIER.

Ne'er welcomer than now was that recall,
So tired am I with slaying and pursuing.

SECOND SOLDIER.

Thrice have I fallen myself in felling the foe ;
And twice I've lain me down awhile to rest,
Amongst the dying and the dead Philistines.

THIRD SOLDIER.

Would that we might bivouac upon the ground ;
And not hie homewards, as 't is whispered round.

[Exeunt ; and re-enter SAUL along with an OFFICER.]

SAUL.

Bid some to minister to ours who lie
In doubtful plight 'twixt life and death ; and see
That all our wounded be sent after us ;
For, after some refreshment, we shall thread
Our way, by starlight, home amongst the dead.

[Exit OFFICER.]

'T will be a weary road, and slippery ;
For the waterspout that came up from the sea
Hath poured amain its rent and shattered volume,
And drenched the route with blood.

(Enter an AIDE-DE-CAMP.)

How now, what news ?

AIDE-DE-CAMP.

Your Majesty, the chase has stayed itself.
The foe exists no more, except in Ekron ;
Where he has sought a shelter and a refuge,
Wasted and worried by this fearful hunting.

SAUL.

There let him lie and ease his panting sides.

[Exit AIDE-DE-CAMP.]

To hunt and to be hunted make existence ;
For we are all or chasers or the chased ;

And some weak, luckless wretches ever seem
 Flying before the hounds of circumstance,
 Adown the windy gullies of this life ;
 Till, toppling over death's uncertain verge,
 We see of them no more. Surely this day
 Has been a wild epitome of life !
 For life is merely a protracted chase ;
 Yea, life itself is only a long day,
 And death arrives like sundown. Lo, the sun
 Lies down i' the waters, and the murky moon
 Out of the east sails sullen. 'T is the hour
 Of fear and melancholy, when the soul
 Hangs poised, with folded wings, 'tween day and
 night.

Now grow I sad as evening, yea, as night ;
 And boding cometh, like eve's mournful bird,
 Across my soul's lea, doleful to my heart.
 Therein, alas ! now new misgivings rise
 At Abner's well-meant but superfluous words,
 That, lieu of stilling fears with sense of safety,
 Stir doubts of danger ; as a friendly band,
 In the repose and hollow of the night,
 Officiously stretched forth to scare one fly
 From a sick sleeper, might upraise a swarm
 To buzz and to awake him. Down, black bodes,
 False flies ! or, if ye will not settle, come
 And singe your little silken wings at lamp
 Of this great victory.

(*Re-enter AIDE-DE-CAMP.*)

What light was that ?

AIDE-DE-CAMP.

My liege, the air is filled with falling stars,
 The fit concomitant and ominous sign
 Of proud Philistia's downfall.

SAUL.

May they be

Of that event portentous ! Pass the word
That bids our host march homewards : — better shade
Than shine, to drowsy brows, and eyes that, failing
Beneath the canopy of drooping lids,
Guide not the falling of way-weary feet.

[Exit AIDE-DE-CAMP ; and a trumpet is blown in the distance.]

How sadly sounds the trumpet through the gloom !
And leaves yet gloomier silence. Sad and low,
The sleepy soldiers to their comrades call ;
And sad the owl hoots, answering from the wood.
The bat awakes, and forth from yonder ruin
Comes sadly sailing hither ; from the sky
Comes, sad, the caw of the funereal rook.
Sad sounds the trooper's laugh, and sad the sound
O' the champing charger neighing o'er its corn,
And sadder yet than all, mine own sad soul.
My soul is much abused ; my thoughts seem things,
Dim moving as the day withdraws ; and night
Comes down, and of the darkness makes a tent
Over our tentless host ; — and now, behold ;
Another host, as from the other world,
Amidst expiring twilight towards me comes ; —
Lorn shadows and uncertain, shifting shapes
Before me flit ; or, ling'ring, on me gaze
With melancholy mien, and dumb with doom.

(Enter an OFFICER.)

OFFICER.

My lord doth linger.

SAUL.

We'll not linger long.

[Exit OFFICER.]

Why linger these illusions ? they are naught.—

And yet I see them, or else think I see : —
Out, idle terrors ! — nay, by hell and heaven,
There's something in it ! Lo ! what is there now
Stood in the vestibule of my conception,
Or from me there a rood, I know not which ?
It is the form of the heroic David,
Crowned, and with Israel's sceptre in its hand.
Hence, Phantom ! It is gone ; but where it stood
Glares with vexed flames, as if they would convince me
That what I've seen was real. Ye quick fires,
If ye would shed a light upon my mind,
Display some secret to my understanding ;
If, by your friendly and unnatural splendor,
Expose some latent danger to my rule,
Inform me with your dumb but luminous tongues,
That wave and wag as if in mockery,
And now, even whilst I question you, low flicker,
If ye have aught to tell me for my good ; —
Speak, in whatever syllables may your
Ethereal vocabulary be formed,
And I will hearken and interpret them ;
Or, with those lambent, curious characters,
Write out for me at once a fiery scroll,
If it shall beam with benefit to Saul.
All's darkness now, like hell, from whence this came.
Ye binding hoops that gird the cask o' the soul,
How have ye burst and out of me let reason !
I was not once thus liable to panic,
Nor troubled with wide-waking, daylight visions.
Then wherefore am I in this hour befuddled ?
It is the brooding on the one sad thought —
The echoing of the Samuel-uttered doom,
Which even now, when I was hopeful, wafted
Me unto my old lunes upon a sudden —

Thus drags me back unto my former self;
 Even as a thing which, long pressed out of form,
 Does, after 't is restored to its true shape,
 If that which holds it be removed, start back
 All foul and crumpled to its old mis-figure.
 Away, and let me this forget: — 't is evil,
 And comes from, or may lead me to, the Devil.

[Exit.]

SCENE VI.

Ephis-dammim. Interior of a large tent. SAUL and JONATHAN, seated.

JONATHAN.

My liege, behold who comes, and with what burden,
 Hung like a pendant to his valiant hand.

(Enter ABNER and DAVID, the latter carrying the head of Goliath.)

ABNER.

Now, cousin, now behold a frontispiece,
 Such as will Nature not soon make again.
 Now scrutinize your enemy in safety.
 How like a slumbering lion's head that seems!
 I could believe Goliath's spirit dreamed
 Again within that dome of cogitation.
 Who would not choose to dream in such a chamber,
 Although within the precincts of death's palace!
 'T is like to some grand ruin overgrown
 And half concealed by herbage. View him well,
 Upwards from the foundation of his chin.

Observe that shaggy beard, those locks that cover
The hand of David as with coils of chains.
Was 't not a sin to kill so fine a beast ?

JONATHAN.

Who shall hereafter trust in his own strength !

SAUL (*aside*).

Yea, or henceforwards in his proper eyesight ?
Yet like him as he 's like himself, that vision.
(*Aloud.*) Lay down thy trophy on the daïs, David.
Implacability is not for mortals.
Now pity moves within me, and I feel
A solemn reverence at sight of that
Fine relic. How august it seems in death !
David, that trophy, I confess, is thine ;
But be it, with its fallen carcass, buried.
His armor will record his bulk, and show
The volume of thy hardihood, as long
As brass endures. He was an arméd galley,
He was a laden argosy ; and thou
But little know'st the treasure thou hast cast
From out the hold of his enormous frame.
His spirit was prodigious as his form ;
And noble, for he warned thee from him : hence,
Cast no indignity upon the brave,
But lay that visage in a decent grave.

DAVID.

The King shall be obeyed. It shall be covered
Up by the earth ; but all his blasphemous boasts
Shall be remembered to his evil fame.

SAUL.

Leave that to those who shall come after us :
But, for ourselves, to life let punishment
Be limited ; 'gainst none be urged the suit
Of vengeance after death. Remember that
We all are evil-doers ; and should justice,
Intent to accuse us of our numerous faults,
Vindictive follow us to the courts of death,
All entering them would certainly be cast.

DAVID.

Your Majesty is wisest ; but was not
This giant an idolater, and a foe
That did invade and strive to enslave the land ?
Doubtless he was : — still, now my ire is passed,
Him and his memory I can from me cast.

SAUL.

You both shall be remembered, long as might
And bravery retain their high reposes.
But let not malice in thy young breast linger.
Full many things are best forgot ; and all
The dross of life, men's vices and their failings,
Should from our memories be let slip away,
As drops the damaged fruit from off the bough
Ere comes the autumn. It were wise, nay, just,
To strike with men a balance ; to forgive,
If not forget, their evil for their good's sake.
The good thus cherished, banished thus the bad,
As the refiner from the charged alembic
Removes the scum that clouds the precious ore,
We shall grow rich in life's pure gold, and lose
Only its base alloy, its dross and refuse. —
But why here linger, while glad Gibeah

Awaits impatient our triumphal entry?
For by this time our messenger is there.
Abner, precede me;

(A sound of a trumpet heard.)

(Hark, the clarion peals!)

And let these young braves follow at our heels.

[Exeunt SAUL and ABNER.]

JONATHAN.

Thou seem'st not glad, my friend and future brother.
Art thou, in fancy, bidding to thy home
Farewell? Or art thou musing upon one
Of Beth-lehem's maidens, who, till thy return,
Restless endures the rack of tender thoughts?
David, thou must no more consort with swains;
Thou must no more return to Beth-lehem.
Farewell, now finally, to tending sheep,
The shepherd's crook, and to the pastoral pipe:
The martial sword and spear, the post of trust,
And this well-won alliance, now await thee.
Why didst thou leave the court? — But this exploit
(Even as an unexpected billow should
Return a drifted bather to the shore)
Hath rendered thee again unto our house.
Come nearer, David; speak unto thy friend.

DAVID.

Pardon me, Prince, but I am dubious:
I know not whether I've displeased the King
In bringing on this trophy.

JONATHAN.

Fear not, David;
Fear not my father's words, dear mate in arms,

But with me follow him to Gibeah,
Whither thou goest in Jehovah's conduct ;
Jehovah, whose directing providence,
From Beth-lehem's quiet but inglorious nook,
At the due moment led thee to the camp ;
The camp which is the entrance to the court,
The court which still is rife with praise of thee.
O, thou art worthy of its utmost praise !
O, thou this hour appearest to me fair !
Most fair thou wert of yore, with healing harp,
Seated, and giving health unto my father ;
But now, erect, and with this rosy flush
Of virgin victory o'er thee, like the mantle
The orient wears at morning breaking cool,
Thou art fairer than the kindling firmament, —
Art fairer than the young, empurpling dawn.
Thou, with thy flinty pebble of the brook,
Hast from the giant's mail struck out a flash,
That doth illumine thee as the lightning 'lumes
The marble idol, making it resplendent.
We shall, I fear, an idol make of thee.
I fear we shall be tempted thee to worship,
Who hast already found a golden shrine
And ruby temple in our heart's affections.
O David, genius makes the world its vassal,
And, from the moistened avenues of these eyes,
I do admire and pay thee lawful homage.
O, do not wonder that I should extol thee,
O, do not wonder that I deem thee fair.
Fair was the morning star, as late I saw him
Shining ere daybreak o'er a verdant hill ;
And fair the eve's star, as I lately saw her,
At twilight beaming on the Dead Sea shore ;
But nor the morn star, as I lately saw him,

Ere daybreak shining o'er a verdant hill,
Nor evening's, as at twilight I beheld her,
All lonely shining o'er the Dead Sea shore,
Pleased me as thou dost now. My fellow-soldier,
I would not be extravagant, nor would I
Willingly flatter thee, — not I, — but thou,
By this most glorious and successful duel,
Art suddenly become a point of fire, —
Art suddenly become the fulgent boss
And shining centre of our kingdom's shield ;
On which this victory's new-risen splendor
Hath gathered and upcupped itself, as if
An ocean were condensed there to a drop,
Outshining diamonds ; and with its beams,
Bright burning, publicly approving him
Who has drawn t' himself bright favor from the might
And majesty of Saul. Speak, David, speak.
No longer stand in shady pensiveness,
When o'er thee hangs the royal ray serene ;
Yea, the full glory of a heaven of honor.
Speak to me, David ; answer me, I pray thee.

DAVID.

What shall I say unto your gracious Highness,
Except that gratitude doth penetrate me,
And cause me to forget his Majesty's check ;
Even as the tepid breathing of the spring
Drives out the inlodged winter from the earth ?

JONATHAN.

O, do not thus respond to me lukewarmly ! —
What shalt thou say ? Listen, and I will tell thee.
Say that we are henceforth in friendship joined ;
That in the lists of amity, henceforward,

With offices of kindness we will vie.
 Wilt thou not cope with me in friendship, brother ?
 Wilt thou not now accept of my love-challenge ?
 What shalt thou say ? — I know the valiant
 Often lack rhetoric, but not so thou,
 Who can, at times, discourse like one inspired,
 And teach the very cherubim to woo.
 Lo, now I woo thee, let us woo each other,
 And not by means of woman-winning words,
 But by the manlier proxy of our deeds.
 Let thine, performed in Elah's steep-bound vale,
 Approach to mine, performed at steepy Michmash.
 Let Elah Michmash kiss, and Michmash Elah ; —
 And for the rest, why, let us imitate them.

(*Kisses DAVID.*)

DAVID.

Too generous Prince, I do believe thou lov'st me ;
 And I love thee, but with a reverence
 Engendered by thy station, and abase
 Mine eyes before thee ; even as the flame
 Which, though of the same element, doth yet
 Abate and fade as on it shines the sun :
 For, Jonathan, although thou deemest me
 To be so worthy, still it matters not ;
 For well I know (and rue) that perfect friendship
 (However we may strive to join ourselves)
 Will not vouchsafe its lacing, golden cords
 To bind disparities. Forgive me if
 I speak too plainly. I am not thine equal :
 I'm but a shepherd though I've slain the giant.

JONATHAN.

O, that desert should, like to distance, dwarf
 Great deeds unto the doer's modest eyes !

'Thou art much more, thou art a warrior,
Upon whose arms the Lord hath deigned to smile.
Nay, thou dost wrong thyself; thou errest, David;
There is not the disparity thou dreamst of.
Are we not nigh one age? Have we not both
Been taken from the commonwealth of Israel?
Are both of us not daring? Are we not,
By thy late pass of arms with that grim creature,
As well as by thy former service, rendered
Unto my father's troubled majesty,
When, by the solemn witchery of thy music,
Thou didst deliver him from the baneful fiend,
Made equals on the genuine grounds of merit?
It is not station in a gilded court,
What thou hast lacked; nor that which I do lack,
A long and legend-covered pedigree;
But noble deeds, and noble natural powers,
That give the stamp and value unto man.
Try us by these, then say if we are not,
In all the traits wherein consists true likeness,
More wrought to be as castings from one mould,
Than, oft, the fashioning in one womb doth give
Of temper and exterior resemblance.

DAVID (*aside*).

I can resist no longer such sweet words.
(*Aloud.*) Jonathan, thou dost compel me to thy wish.
I did esteem thee ere I saw thee, and
Desired to emulate thy daring deeds.

JONATHAN.

And dost thou say so? Let us plight each other.
Hear now, ye angels, if such hover o'er us,

And shed sincerity upon us both ;
 That this intended covenant may be,
 E'en as your sacred selves are, strong and blessed.
 David, I offer thee perpetual friendship,
 And, therewith, such large measure of my love
 As I have never given before to man.

DAVID.

Which I accept ; and offer in return,
 What you have always had, fidelity ;
 And add thereunto, by your free gift laid,
 A love not given before to man or maid.

JONATHAN.

Take thou, unmeasured, mine ; and, with it, take
 This robe, sword, bow, and girdle, as a sign
 And seal of this our covenant.

(A dull sound heard in the distance.)

We come : —

'Tis the last roll of the departing drum.
 Let us set forth, and overtake the King,
 Towards Gibeah urging upon victory's wing.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE VII.

A sylvan country between Ephraim and Gibeah. A sound of females singing merrily. Enter SAUL and the OFFICERS of his staff.

SAUL *(entering)*.

Our land this year receives a second spring,
 So rife it is with gay and bird-like carol,
 Proceeding yet from out our victory's grove ;

That, as we journey, doth produce new echoes,
In widening series, breaking still anew.
What is it that these maids are uttering,
Who seem to me much more methodical,
In the wild elegance of their mazy mirth,
Than all before we 've noted ?

FIRST OFFICER.

Here they come.

(Enter a group of young females singing and dancing, and with musical instruments.)

SONG.

Far as Ephs-dammim came
The Philistines, dreadful name !
But to meet them went the King,
And young David with his sling.

CHORUS *(with dancing)*.

Saul he has his thousands slain,
David has his thousands ten.

SAUL.

Ah !

SONG.

In the vale 'tween mountains lying,
Came Goliath forth defying ;
Fear came with him on our host,
But brave David stayed his boast.

CHORUS.

Saul he has his thousands slain,
But David has his thousands ten.

SAUL.

This is the very creeping towards the height
At which he showed near Ekron. Do my ears

Deceive me here, as there my eyes befooled me?
Keep calm, my blood.

SONG.

Pebbles five from out the brook,
David to the encounter took;
Fitted one unto his sling,
Sent it on its airy wing.

CHORUS.

Saul he has his thousands slain,
David has his thousands ten.

SAUL.

O, now I rue I did not meet the giant,
Or disallow the deed unto the youth.
I'll stop this chant. — Nay, let them end their folly.

SONG.

Lo! the giant, pierced, fell dead;
Lo! the proud Philistines fled,
Chased by Saul, devoid of ruth,
And the handsome shepherd youth.

CHORUS.

Saul he has his thousands slain,
But David has his thousands ten.

SECOND OFFICER.

See how the King's look lowers.

SONG.

Nor till reached far Ekron's gate
Doth pursuit its fury ate;
Then Philistia's daughters wail,
While with joy we loud the gale.

CHORUS.

Saul he has his thousands slain,
But bold David thousands ten.

FIRST OFFICER.

Speak to the King :

Perchance the fiend is entering him again,
For hell is in his eyes.

SECOND OFFICER.

It is too late.

SAUL.

Fools, tell what indiscriminating churl
Composed for you that burden !

FIRST OFFICER.

Towers have fallen,
Whirlwinds have wrenched their wasteful way through
woods,
And the outrushing thunder scared courageous men,
With less dread noise !

SECOND OFFICER.

It surely was a demon
Then blew the trumpet of the royal mouth,
For it was hell's own peal !

FIRST OFFICER.

As when the blast
Scatters the buds, and leaves bare branches swinging,
The maids have vanished ; and the King, perturbed,
Stalks to and fro. Behold, he's struggling with
A spirit of wrath (whether it be his own
Or from the Lord).

SAUL.

Now let me curb mine anger,
Lest it should gallop with me off the field.

FIRST OFFICER.

I never saw the King so much incensed.

SAUL.

Nay, this would spur the dullest steed to start,
And throw his rider too, scorning the bridle.
Hold hard, hold hard, though we should break the reins.
Honor a subject and insult the King!—
'T is well the caper-cutting troop have fled,
And to a better purpose put their heels.
What next? blows follow threats. This was defiance;
This was the very pass and guard of young
Rebellion; and these girls his saucy trulls.
Ah, I have been too lenient and secure;
But now the rigor of my reign begins.

FIRST OFFICER.

Mark him.

SECOND OFFICER.

I do, I do: he's calmer now,
But deadlier. He looks more fell than tiger
When it hath couched it for the fatal spring.

SAUL.

Ay, ay, I'll note them; I will be abroad;
I will have spies in every town and hamlet:
For it is meet that it should be so, when
They keep a poet in these unpolished parts.—
This is the work of elder heads than theirs.
Why find I not the covert knave who wrote
Their pæan, and at once asunder saw him?
But I'll be prompt henceforward, and Conviction
Shall hurry Execution to his office:—
Yea, and Suspicion shall be competent

To stand unchallenged and give evidence.
Go, put our troops in motion, gentlemen :
These were but foolish hoydens, after all.

FIRST OFFICER.

Let us not leave him, though he so commands us.
He's hot within, though at the surface cooled.

SAUL.

'T was David through the whole, and ever highest :
A studied theme.

FIRST OFFICER.

Look how he frowns again :
This bodes some ill.

SAUL.

To me they have ascribed
Thousands, but unto David tens of thousands ;
And what more could he have except the kingdom ?

SECOND OFFICER.

He muttering walks, scarce knowing what he does.

SAUL.

I've been deceived ; these also were but spectres. —
You go not, gentlemen : the song is ended. —
Woe unto Levi if he this inspired !

FIRST OFFICER.

Stay.

SECOND OFFICER.

No ; we shall but draw on us his wrath.

SAUL.

Am I not in an after-dinner dream ?
No, nor in twilight revery, when fear

Carves out an image from its own conceits.
I doubt mine eyes, but I'll believe mine ears :
It cannot be that I am twice befooled.
Look, how my officers yet stand amazed !
I'll to the air give Ekron's vision ; but
Shall this dissolve away, like that, in doubt, —
This that enthralls its wondering witnesses ?
Go on before me, gentlemen, I pray you.

FIRST OFFICER.

Myself will dare him, to prevent worse issue.

(To SAUL.)

The King is moved by this hyperbole.

SAUL.

Hyperbole ! It was beyond all bounds.
What in this world shall now be counted pure,
When lies and treason pass through such sweet lips ?

FIRST OFFICER.

There is no conduit but is sometimes fouled.

SAUL.

Then angels' mouths may yield obscenity ;
And why should men strive to be nice and clean ?

FIRST OFFICER.

Nor man nor maiden is immaculate.

SAUL.

There is no purity in this foul world,
Nor dwells consistency in thought or thing.
The mind is but a toy for grosser nature,
And circumstances dominate our deeds.

Now straight to Gibeah urge. Along, along ;
And bid the drums outroll their loudest thunder ;
And let the shrill pipes and the martial bugles
Swell to the uttermost. Be clashed the cymbals !
Let all the trumpets rend the sky together,
And bid our forces raise a general shout,
That this vile gust of harmony may be lost
In a loud storm and raging sea of discord ! [Exit

SECOND OFFICER.

Why did these maidens thus salute the King,
Except it were to hurt their darling, David ?
This is a world of wide-eyed wonder ; one
Where foolish friends, admiring dauntless deeds,
May damn the doer with unmeasured praises.

[*Exeunt, and presently a peal of trumpets, drums, cymbals, &c., mingled with cheers of the distant soldiery.*





ACT III.

SCENE I.

The Alps. Time, night, with stars. Enter MALZAH, walking slowly.

MALZAH.

So, so ; I feel the signal.
It seems to reach me through the air,
To Saul it prompts me to repair.
I wish 't would cease ; it doth not please
Me now to terminate my leisure.
I was alone ; and here to groan
At present is my greatest pleasure.
I'll come anon ; I say begone ; —
What is the wayward King to me ?
I say begone ; I'll come anon.
O, thou art strong ; I'll follow thee.

[Exit, and enter the angel ZELETHA.]

ZELETHA.

He flees, he flees, across the seas
That eastward lead to Canaan's land ;
And Heaven commands me not to cease
To urge, yet guide, his hand.

(Looking upwards.)

How every star reminds me of my lover !

When we did part, he on me cast his eyes,
Bright as those orbs. — Yet over them suffusion
Came like the mists o'er evening, as he charged me
Still to him to return (if so I might
Return afresh to him, my home and goal),
What time the earth returned day's light to heaven.
So would I now swift soar unto his bosom,
But I must not abandon this foul fiend,
Until his work is done. Hence do I follow
Him through the spaces of the universe,
Still tracking him in silence, as I track
Him now across these heaven-piercing heights,
O'er which the quiet, congregated stars
Dance, twinkling-footed, and, in gladness, make
Mute immemorial measure, without song.
Yet hearken ; the immeasurable yawn
Methinks awakens, and, by me evoked,
This grave of silence gives a ghost of sound.
What song is that which wanders hitherward,
Falling as faintly and as dewlike down
Into the urn of my night-opened ear,
As might, like incense, to the nostril come
The floating fragrance of a far-off flower ?
It is the voice of some desiring seraph,
That lonely sings unto her absent love ;
And, in the breathing of her languishment,
Gives more than words unto the dumb abyss.
I'll also sing, since some ascending angel
May hear it, and repeat it to my cherub.

(Sings.)

I said, farewell,
And smiled, — for tears yet never fell in heaven ;
But thou didst sigh,
“ Farewell,” didst sigh ; “ return to me at even.”

But why at even
Didst thou to thee solicit my return?
Since distance cannot
Divide us who in old embraces burn.

Then let's unsay
"Farewell," — which we ought never to have said,
But, each to each,
Words of rejoicing and delight instead.

Lorn thoughts from thee
Put far, then, since, though now from thee apart,
I soon shall be
Again thy love-mate, wheresoe'er thou art.

Lo, where yon demon, with increasing speed,
Makes his dim way across the night-hung flood,
Due to the Hebrew King, with onward heed,
Like to a hound that snuffs the scent of blood.
I'll follow him.

[Exit]

SCENE II.

*Gibeah. A spacious apartment in the palace. Time, the
morrow.*

SAUL (*entering*).

Now let hell work (or heaven) its will on Saul!
I am beset by a new demon; still
That chorus haunts me, and from every other
Study my mind reverts to that foul lode-thought.
I know that I am not in health of body;
Hence may arise the sickness of my mind.

For I am seized with ague of the soul,
Now hot, now cold, now rage, now fear, in turns :
And sometimes I believe I feel my old,
My demon-ruled and fatal fit returning.
O God, give me not up again to that !
David, young roe, start from thy form, and flee
Out of the dangerous thicket of my thoughts !

[Exit, and re-enter.]

I know the fit's around me gathering.
I cannot be deceived ; I feel the true,
Alas, too true, awakening of the storm.
O, let my thoughts' course now turn far from David ;
Lest, when the helm of reason no more guides me,
I run him down upon his life's young sands,
And voyage thenceforth beneath remorseful clouds.
Come, ye benignant ministers of heaven,
Ye mild mid-region-dwelling genii,
Angels, or whatsoever be your name,
Whose hands, still charged with various dispensations,
Administer heavenly medicine to the world,
Come to my heart, and, with some blessed unction,
Assuage and mollify its growing ire ;
Purge me of these unnatural suggestions ;
O, disinfect me of these sad misgivings !

[Exit, and re-enter.]

It cannot be ; 't is blackness all, and thickens,
And in it I must grope, howe'er I stumble.
Alas, I know not if I may not have
A too substantial ground for dread of David.
Granting his image on the plain near Ekron
Were merely in imagination's mirror ;
Yet its re-rendering by the saucy minstrels,
That seeming many-voiced corroboration,
Wherein true flesh and blood, at ears and eyes,

Forcing conviction onwards by two paths,
Did cry out loudly to the same dumb burden, —
What can be said to that, except to ask,
Is not this he to whom my throne was given ?
O horror ! O, now blows temptation on me
Until I strain beneath the infernal gale.
Pour on me, hurricane ; I can withstand thee.
Nay, nay ; now hold. I will not — yet I will ;
He shall not live to peril me. I go ; —
Nay, hold, rash fool ; down with that bloody flag.
O, look not there, my soul, at that false polestar
Would coldly guide thee into a dark gulf,
From whence thou never couldst return to these
Waters of innocence, — of innocence
Though troubled. Ah, alas, thus insecure !
I deemed that I again was snugly housed ;
When from the wilderness there comes a blast,
That casts my cabin of assurance down,
And leaves me in the tempest. Seemed it spring
Was only just returning to my soul ;
And here I pant in sultry summer air,
Wherein I feel the fiend wild floating round me,
Like a huge blowfly, and upon my spirit
Seeking to sow new horrors. Phantom, spare me :
Begone from me, without thee filled with sorrow.
Do thou not bring thy rough, black waves to sink me.
[Exit, and re-enter wildly.]
He comes again ; the fiend again attempts me.
Who is this thing that whips me into gall ?
I know him now, — at last methinks I know him ;
'Tis Spleen, 't is Spleen ; it is the Goblin Spleen ;
Who still can find occasion, as can find
The spider corner where to hang its web.
David is now my occasion ; David is

To me a boil, now greedily drawing to it
The humors of my long-distempered heart.
O Spleen, thou art a devil of thyself,
And canst bring up Gehenna from the deep,
And therewith set on fire thy victim's soul !
O Spleen, Spleen, Spleen, unnatural embryo,
That gnawest the womb that doth engender thee !
Wolf, out of me ! Ah, have I named thee right ?
O, 't is a wolf, it is a devil, in me ;
A devil that I cannot, dare not, name ;
A wolf that seems composed of hell's black flame.
Burn, flame, what care I ! Wolf or fiend, devour me.
Grow, foetus, grow ; rack violated Saul
With pangs more dire than woman's in her travail !
Spirit, grow riot ; raise all Tophet in me ;
Confusion, blindness, and barbarity.
Oh, oh ! — Why should I moan if Heaven sends it ? —
'T is hell, 't is hell ; I hear her rumbling wheels,
That, when this outrage is accomplished, come
To bear me to the region of the damned.
I 'll go and clamor unto Heaven to save me.

[Exit, and re-enter.]

I am not heard : heaven's doors are closed, and will
Not open to my knocking. O for war ;
New cruise ; — but O for no young sharks of Davids
To swallow down my glory. But the hook
Shall stick in him. Now, melting mercy, fly ;
Begone, begone, ye pleadings ; I 'll not hear ye.
Why should I hear you when myself's unheard ?
Why should I spare him when God spares not me ?
I 've been by far too casuistical ;
And casuistry would not let's kill flies,
Nor any other vermin. But I 'll kill.
All Israel knows that I am under ban ;

I am encompassed round with enemies,
 And I will fight my way through though I murder.
 Start not, my heart, at that outblurted word,
 As might a steed recoiling from a serpent ;
 Beat not thus like a hammer in my breast.
 Murder is only death, and what as death
 So common ? I will do it ; — I must do it. —
 It will not be so painful as I thought ;
 Anticipation ever is a cheat.
 Ah, with what furlongs murderward I 'm striding !
 Hence, and with motion whirl my soul from David !

[Exit, and re-enter.]

Why, many a maid ere this has been defiled,
 And many a brave youth has untimely perished.
 The whole world dies. Yes, that 's the way to think.
 So probably the maddened Moses thought,
 In killing the Egyptian ; so thought Jael,
 When nailing Sisera to the floor ; so Ehud
 Whispered as tickling Eglon's ribs ; and Samuel,
 (Ah, glad I am that I have thought of him,)
 Samuel when he too played the slayer. Yes,
 But all these victims would have done as much
 For those who did those deeds on them ; but David —
 Oh, 't were ingratitude and tenfold murder !
 Oh, oh, 't were foul, 't were foul ! a ghastly deed !
 Let me not stray into that vault again.
 I 'll go and strive to pray down these suggestions,
 And ask Heaven's pardon that I entertained them.

[Exit, and enter the QUEEN and DAVID, the latter bearing his harp.]

QUEEN.

O, happy is it, David, happy that
 Thou, his physician, com'st with his disease.

I heard his voice ; he cannot be remote.
Hie after him, and be once more his healer.

[Exit DAVID.]

O, sorrow riding pillion unto joy,
Turning the latter to a mockery !
How long with Saul will this foul spirit bide ?
When will Jehovah's wrath be satisfied ?
Lo, here Saul comes, his visage fraught with ill.
I must begone ; his very looks would kill.

[Exit, and re-enter SAUL.]

SAUL.

Why have I fallen again upon my knees,
And cast mine eyes in agony towards heaven ?
No prayer of mine arose, no prayer I breathed.
I cannot pray ; for that which should aspire
Rests 'neath despair, or turns aside at ire.
Why should I try to pray ? I have not prayed
These years. Would cursing not avail me more ?
For I have known men that have cursed out humors,
Like trampling out dispersed and dangerous sparks.

[Enter DAVID.]

I'll trample out him, and be thereby at peace ;
I'll pin him to the wall. This hour he dies.

(DAVID *beginning to play*, SAUL *throws the javelin at him,*
which sticks in the wall, and DAVID escapes.)

Transport him to the grave, ye angels, now ;
Bear him away, ye ministers who bore
The corpse of Moses ; and as it ye buried,
That none know where it lies unto this day,
So murdered David's ever hide away.
Ungrateful Saul ! Poor murdered youth !
I'll look upon him though it sear my sight.
(*Seeing that DAVID has escaped.*)

Deception rules the hour, and hell or spleen
Hath made my skull a hall to riot in.
Now will he straightway go and tell the Queen
Why, let him go and tell Gehenna's king ;
No soul shall live to fill my heart with dread.
To the winds, remorse. They 'll say the spirit did it,
And they 'll say truly. Come forth, javelin, come ;
To-day, it seems, death is not David's doom.

[Exit, and enter MALZAH.]

MALZAH.

Out of his hand the javelin flew,
And entered into the wall : —
Ha, ha, ha ! there 's a strange ado
When at such small game flies Saul.
He struck at David, and said 't was I :
He says I made the javelin fly :
He grasped it hard, and yet it flew :
Ha, ha ! ha, ha ! what an ado !
How mortals worry when they slip !
If they, like us, their souls would dip
And dye all o'er in one grand sinning,
We less should hear of their conscience-dinning.
Temptation, indeed ! they need it not :
Whew, whew, let man go rot.

[Exit, but re-enter immediately, laughing heartily.]

Oh, ho ! oh, ho ! here 's a pretty jest.
I 'll labor now, having had my rest :
His strange abuse has given me zest.
Ha, ha ! ha, ha ! I 'll him re-fetter :
The next time he tries perhaps he 'll do better.
Lo, here he comes ; and, if right I spy,
He has still got David in his eye.

(Enter SAUL.)

SAUL.

What if I should dismiss him merely ? Nay :
In that case he 'd but spread abroad his glory
Amongst the people ; as Samson's foxes spread
Their fire among the corn of the Phillistines.

MALZAH.

Murder him, and there 's an end. To faint 's to fall.

SAUL.

Ah, was not that a voice ? No ; 't was my own
Soul's echo.

[Exit.

MALZAH.

I will follow him.

[Exit, and re-enter soon.

Again

I've breathed him ; he is nearly mad. What with
This new-born jealousy, and the cold envy,
Which, like the north wind on the winter fire,
Blows into rage the embers of the spleen
That nature kindled in him ere his birth ;
And what with mine own goading influence,
He, as of old, but now with settled aim,
Broods in the palace, or o'er the grounds goes stalking
With his clutched javelin. I'll visit him
Again anon : meantime I'll stay me here,
Awaiting whatsoever shall befall,
Singing a little to tide my tedium.

SONG.

Ye melancholy dogs below,
Up hell's perpetual furnace blow
With general sighs ; I pity ye,
But what is your distress to me ?
In many sorts I count you better
Than I, who have escaped your fetter.

Here comes my royal maniac in my chains.
I'm here, yet riding in his brains.

(Enter SAUL.)

SAUL.

I will extinguish him.

MALZAH.

What, me? Nay, nay.

SAUL.

I will extinguish him with this, and nothing,
Except some smoke and odor, shall remain;
Merely remembrance, and a month's soft wind
Bears that away. The ungrateful multitude
Remember for a month, and then forget.

[Exit.

MALZAH.

Ha, ha! ha, ha! indeed 't is very true.
Now Malzah may lie quiet, for the King
Needs no more seasoning to this temptation:
He simmers now in such a pitchy caldron
That he can scarce escape without defilement.
I shall not hurry him, nor broil myself.
His fire is hot, his loaf is leavening;
His broth I'll brew before 't is evening.
I'll sing again, for now Zelehtha's gone,—
I hope to heaven, and to stay there; though
That is an aspiration for her good,
And I do wish her more than all the evil
That ever yet befell or saint or devil.
Ah me!

SINGS.

There was a devil and his name was I;
From out Profundus he did cry:
He changed his note as he changed his coat.
And his coat was of a varying dye.

It had many a hue : in hell 't was blue,
 'T was green i' the sea, and white i' the sky.
 O, do not ask me, ask me why
 'T was green i' the sea, and white i' the sky ;
 Why from Profundus he did cry :
 Suffice that he wailed with a chirruping note,
 And quaintly cut was his motley coat. —

I have forgot the rest. Would I could sleep ;
 Would I could sleep away an age or so,
 And let Saul work out his own weal or woe :
 All that I ask is to be let alone.

SINGS.

O, to be let alone ! to be let alone !
 To laugh if I list ; if I list to groan ;
 Despairing, yet knowing God's anger o'erblown.
 O, why should God trouble me ?
 Why should he double my
 Sorrow, pursuing me when he has thrown
 Me out of his favor ? O, why should he labor
 Down lower ever thrusting me into hell's zone ?
 O let me alone ! O let me alone !
 O leave me, Creator, Tormentor, alone !

Peace ; here comes Saul, more wretched than myself.

(SAUL enters, and slowly crosses the apartment.)

Behold how swollen yet haggard is his face !
 He doth remind me, as he hither stalks,
 Of Lucifer, in his pent anger, pacing
 Over the black and burning floor of hell.
 He's charged ; so have worked in him the last drops
 That I let fall upon his soul. Woe now
 To whomsoe'er shall meet him. Now 's my time :
 I'll enter him, that he may work his doom,
 And, peradventure, I get my release.

His mind's defences are blown down by passion ;
And I can enter him unchallenged, as
A traveller does an inn, and, when I 'm there,
(He is himself so much now like a demon,)
He will not notice me. I will lie perdue
'Tween his own shadow's bounds ; he will not see
Me, from the very darkness of his soul.
I 'll couch within his gloom, like to a spark
Amongst combustibles. Again he 's pregnant
Of an intent pernicious ; and a throe
Again I 'll give him, in a double sense,
To hasten his delivery.

[As he is going, ZEPHO enters.]

ZEPHO.

Hist, hist !

MALZAH.

Now, by all things ill timed ! Would that thy heel
Just now were sticking in a trap of steel !
Wherefore at present com'st thou stealing hither ?

ZEPHO.

Tell in what kennel thou hast lately housed ;
For, save in that one, I in all earth's corners
Have lately sought thee. I am come from Zaph.

MALZAH.

Well, what wants Zaph ?

ZEPHO.

To know thy speed.

MALZAH.

Thrice thine.

ZEPHO.

Zaph wants to know of thy prosperity.

MALZAH.

I never knew a devil that did prosper.

ZEPHO.

Now answer soberly : Zaph asks thy fare.

MALZAH.

I never knew a devil that fared better :
I feed on a king's sighs, do drink queen's tears,
Am clothed with half a nation's maledictions.
Am not I a lucky fellow ?

ZEPHO.

Never saucier.

How goes the royal Saul ?

MALZAH.

O, furiously :

He from a giddy tower lately jumped,
And nearly broke his neck ; — he says I threw him.

ZEPHO.

Leave him, and turn on Samuel.

MALZAH.

'T were in vain.

I am in thralldom to a heavenly spirit : —
See where she comes !

ZEPHO.

It is exceeding bright.

MALZAH.

So we were once ; but now how dim !

ZEPHO.

There's hope

In that. Hast thou not oftentimes observed

The snow upon some ever-shining summit
Precipitated to the dim ravine ?
So may her order yet, for fault or freak,
From Heaven fall dimming into our dark hell.
I'll stir up Zaph to send unto thy rescue. [Exit.

MALZAH.

May Zaph be damned (as he assuredly is)
For sending thee, his henchman, here to quiz !

(Enter ZELEHTHA.)

I bade that prying fellow to begone ; —
I'm diligent to be the sooner done. [Exit.

ZELEHTHA.

I'll follow him, or he'll o'eract his part :
Perhaps destroy the man of God's own heart.

[Exit, and enter the QUEEN and DAVID.]

DAVID.

Fear not for me, although his Majesty
Is even as a chafed and senseless beast ;
And standing in his presence no less risk
Than being with a lion in its den :
Should he again his lance against me wield,
Again the Lord will be to me a shield.

QUEEN.

Then take thy station here and ply thy harp.
O David, do thine uttermost again
To exorcise from him this evil spirit.
Alas, I thought thy former minstrelsy,
And the employment of these latter wars,
Had healed his soul ; so that a tranquil life,
Except those blasts that we expect to blow

Around a royal head, henceforth were his.
Begin, that he may hear thee ere he see thee.
Strike that old air composed before the flood,
And which has often calmed his boiling blood.

DAVID.

I will rehearse that wild and wondrous air.
'T is said it draws foul spirits, since 't was played
Oft for them by their human paramours ;
Whom, when they hear it, they believe returned
Up from the uncertain regions of the dead,
And so go forth to meet them.

QUEEN.

Here he comes ;

Still armed, and now his lips all dropping foam.

I 'll fly, for he doth hate me in these fits. [Exit.

*(A javelin is hurled into the apartment and sticks in the wall ;**DAVID escapes as before.)*SAUL *(entering)*.

After him, fiend, that sitt'st within me. Forth,
Infernal hound, and fetch him. O thou false one !

(Enter the QUEEN.)

Hast thou met David ? Hath he told thee aught ?
Bid him come hither ; — or he 'd better hence,
For what I 'll do I 'll do.

QUEEN.

Peace, peace ; O, peace.

SAUL.

Ay, know'st thou why that trembling shaft is there ?
*(The QUEEN draws the javelin from the wall, and throws it
out of the room.)*

QUEEN.

Now, my dear husband, come and take some rest.

SAUL.

Yes, when I've done what I have vowed to do.
I am beneath the tyranny of a vow,
Which I will honor whilst I am eclipsed,
That I hereafter may have power to plead
I did it in the darkness. — 'T is the fiend : —
He darkens, yet illuminates, my mind,
Like the black heavens when lightnings ride the wind.

QUEEN.

Your sun will shine anon.

SAUL.

Tormentor, no !

I want it not to shine ; let the wind blow.
Let me wreck all my foes, or else be lost
Myself upon this black and fatal coast.
Mad pilot, wouldst thou see me drowned i' the vortex ? —
O, it is I am mad ; mad, mad is Saul.

QUEEN.

Then, if you know that you are mad, at once
Confine yourself within your chamber's bounds.
Come, for your slumber will betake you soon.
You will be happy when the Spirit's gone.

SAUL.

Gone ! when he's gone forever. When will 't be ?
When will the hour of his departure come,
When will he leave me to return no more ?

QUEEN.

O, fall not thus away : — What, would you cast

Yourself upon the ground? Fie! burdened care,
Bent-bodied, better is than prone despair.
Nay, nay, revive; why, even now I spy
The faltering fiend departing at your eye.
Be Saul, be Saul, be Israel again.

SAUL.

Ah, would I were again a quiet hind!

QUEEN.

And leave your sovereignty? You sleep, you dream.
Awaken, Saul, and be your proper self:
Return, return from this wild wandering.
Come home; your Troubler's gone: come home. —
O, fill that horrid blank upon your face;
Tear off therefrom that veil of lunacy;
O, cast that eye-bewildered stupor: Saul,
Shake off this creeping, death-like lethargy.
What, will you never be to sense recalled?
Help me, ye angels; help, Jehovah. — Saul,
What are your thoughts? Know you not where you are?
You are outside yourself, are disembodied; —
O, put your soul into that emptied frame!
Get from the weather; get within yourself.
Why stand you thus beneath unsheltering eaves,
Amidst a deluge of dread, pelting thoughts?
Come in, come in, poor King, into thyself; —
Saul, Saul; — O, do not look so lost; O, let me
Now lead you back to recollection: lo, 't is I;
Lo, you are here though much perplexed: behold
You stand upon the threshold of yourself,
Yet know it not; look on it, 't is yet fair;
Enter, and you shall find its furnishing
Is, even yet, such as becomes a king.

SAUL.

Nay, I am but a puppet, not a king.
Kings are supreme and uncontrolled, but I
Am under horrid slavery to a being
That I despise and loathe.

QUEEN.

Forget it now.
Come, come at once to bed.

SAUL.

Ahinoam,
Although I must acknowledge some past faults,
Can God permit this outrage yet be just?

QUEEN.

Renew not your old reasonings, but come
And take the sleep that follows on your fit.

SAUL.

Fit, fit! my fit! 't is strange that this should seem fit:—
Why, had I killed him in my fit, it would
Have been down written murder; yes, and Samuel,
And haply this malicious goblin too,
Staying my passage to a city of refuge,
Had haled me back into Jehovah's wrath,
And Tophet of my conscience. Ahinoam,
There 's something wrong in this recurring fit:
I will investigate it, I will dare
To question more than e'er I 've done as yet;
Yes, I will question on till I am answered.

QUEEN.

Cease raving, Saul, and come; your mind needs rest,
And not the contemplation of an inquest,

Which, to the coolest, most impartial stranger,
Had need unconjure a black pause of caution,
Like to a ghost, to awe him from the inquiry.

SAUL.

No ghost shall thus awe me ; for I have known,
Yea, oft have in me, an unconjured ghost,
More dreadful far than any human terror,
And am not yet affrighted. What, shall I
Not ask from whence this comes ? Shall I accept
Evil, nor seek to know its origin ?
Shall I be dumb because great Samuel 's spoken ?
No ! I 'll demand, I will seek satisfaction ;
I will have some, though bitter, theory : —
Yea, I already to my soul have such
Obtained by fearless thinking. It is magic ;
Magic, malicious magic ; it is Samuel
Leagued with the remnant of the sorcerers.
Stand not aghast at my accusing him :
I would accuse the high, majestic heavens,
I would accuse the blue, ethereal air,
If, when from my ablutions forth, I found
My person sudden smirched ; — say, wouldst not thou ?

QUEEN.

I would not dare accuse the sacred seer
Of falsehood and deception.

SAUL.

Then thou wouldst

Accuse thy husband. Well, so let it be ;
No fond respect shall stifle my suspicion.
Prophets are not beyond the freaks of poor,
Affronted mortals, any more than kings.
Why dost thou look upon me thus alarmed ?

Thou wouldst expostulate? No, no, 't is vain;
I will not hear even thee: I 'll march right onward,
Nor list to any charming; I 'll escape;
And I will punish, too, for what 's been done;
I 'll come upon my secret enemies,
And scatter them and their vile incantations.

QUEEN.

O, is the gamut of your heart played over?

SAUL.

Not yet, not yet. I have a clang of discords
Yet for thine ear. By hell, it makes me fierce
To hear the cant of silly dames and priests.
Those talk of right, and charge great heaven with wrong;
These dribble on my head their verbal spite,
And say 't is thunder of heaven's waterspouts;
Those honor me, yet count me reprobate;
These send unto my soul a foul access,
And name it the evil spirit from the Lord.
Out, out! shall I be silenced and beguiled
By a chicanery that drives me wild?
Wife, I am sane at present, though uncivil;
But these reflections half bring back my devil.
Methinks I hear him humming round my head:
Old hornet, cease. Wife, lead to bed, to bed:—
Would I could sleep,—would, would that I were dead.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

SAUL's bedchamber. SAUL asleep and chained upon a bed.
Time, night. A lamp burning. Enter MALZAH.

MALZAH.

He is now sleeping, but his fervent brow
Is all meandered o'er by swollen veins.
Across his temple one appears nigh bursting.
He breathes, too, heavy, and a feeble moan
I hear within him ; showing that his soul
(Like to a child that 's wept itself to sleep)
Even in slumber doth retain its trouble.
I 'm loath again to rack him ; but I will,
For I am desperate to escape from thrall.
I will breathe hotly on his countenance,
And when he wakes and doth cry out for water, --
Which I will make his servants slow in bringing, --
I 'll enter him 'midst his vociferations,
And goad him back to madness.

(Approaches the KING.)

SAUL.

O, leave me, foul fiend !

MALZAH.

He dreams.

SAUL.

Thou art not from God.

MALZAH.

Alas, I am.

SAUL.

255

SAUL.

I have long thee withstood.

MALZAH.

Boast not too much.

SAUL.

Depart from me, horrible presence !

MALZAH (*advancing nearer*).

'T is the wind that hath blown me against thee ; 't is fate
That I and thou thus for a season should mate.

(*Having breathed upon SAUL'S face.*)

I love thee not, and yet too much I love thee,
To do my work effectually, I fear.

(*Breathes on him again.*)

There, there.

SAUL.

O, to be pent in hell ! I suffocate.
Veer, winds that from the red equator scorch me,
And let the north blow on me till I shiver.
Ah, for an avalanche of snow ! Fall, flakes,
And blind me ; cover me up, drifts ; freeze, freeze.
Seize on me, blast, and hurl me into winter.

MALZAH.

Again I 'll breathe upon him.

(*Breathes upon him.*)

SAUL.

Full threescore fiends and ten, each with a spear,
Half molten, and thrust through me from behind,
Chased me all up the burning lane from hell.
Some water, water, ho ! Ah, here again !

Each with his brand swept through me, and dispersed
Now all of them back hissing.

(*Waking.*)

Water ! water !

What ho, bring hither water ! Is there none
To watch me ? Jonathan ; what, Michal, Merab ; —
Ahinoam gone too ! O, ye are all
Forgetful of me, and my children take
Their ease and pastime whilst their father's dying.
Some water, water ! — O, to breathe upon
Carmel or Ararat ! Clouds, burst upon
My bosom, as upon their heads ye burst :
Pour on my head, ye waterspouts : cataracts,
Dash down my throat and turn me to an ocean. —
Ah, will there be no rain again, no dew ?
To the dank vineyard ! let me go and wallow,
Suck out, and trample out the freshness. Chained !

(*Writhes furiously to break the chain.*)

MALZAH.

I'll enter him now, but not to do him evil,
But, out of ruth, to help him snap his chain.

[MALZAH vanishes ; and SAUL, having broken his chain,
rushes out.]

MALZAH (*again visible*).

I am not lazy, but I loathe to do
The work of Heaven. — Ah, here comes my lady !
I'll hide myself in Saul.

[*Exit in haste.*]

ZELEHTHA (*entering*).

How quickly the defaulter flees away !
The fitful fiend ! I knew him once in heaven,
And none more diligent and adroit than he ;
None warmer in their worship. Yet, even then,

This spirit was to speculation given,
And curious questionings on themes that lie
Beyond the reach of finite thought. — Poor wretch !
He lived in good alone, yet sought the source
Of evil, until evil to him came ; —
The Essence sought, that never came of search,
But bides still in the bosom of belief.
In seeking what he had, he all things lost,
And found but misery. Into his soul,
Of reverence forsaken, entered fear ;
For peace came trouble, and for joy, distress.
A sad exchange ! for love came loathing ; guilt
Thus came, and dread ; and, last, despair.
At first, self-tempted, he became a prey
To the Arch-Tempter ; with him, quenched, went down
Into the pit, from whence escaped he comes,
And here on earth the moments much misspends
In moody merriment or sullen rage ;
And, fierce assaulting him by fits, forgets
To do true judgment on the soul of Saul.
I'll follow him, and see that he obeys. [Exit.

SCENE IV.

A vineyard. The moon shining. Enter SAUL, struggling with
MALZAH.

SAUL.

Creature, begone, nor harrow me with horror !
Thine eyes are stars ; O, cover them, O, wrap
Them up within thy cloudy brows : stand off,
Contend not with me, but say who thou art.
Lo ! I am Saul, the sad. demoniac king,

But who art thou, strange, yet familiar ?
 Methinks I know thee, — yes, thou art my demon ,
 Thou art the demon that torments my soul.
 I charge thee say, mysterious visitant,
 At whose behest thou comest, and for what
 Offences deep of mine : nay, stand aloof :
 Confess, malicious goblin, or else leave me ;
 Leave me, O goblin, till my hour is come :
 I'll meet thee after death ; appoint the place ;
 On Gilead, or beside the flowing Jordan ;
 Or, if parts gloomier suit thee, I'll repair
 Down into Hinnom, or up to the top
 Of Horeb in the wilderness, or to the cloud-
 Concealéd height of Sinai ascend,
 Or dwell with thee 'midst darkness in the grave.

(Enter ZELETHA, invisible to SAUL.)

MALZAH.

I cannot enter him now ; he does so set
 And close his soul against me. Thou art not angry ?
 Give me commandment, and I now will rend
 His body into fragments, and let out
 His soul, for thee to do with what thou wilt.

(Crawling abjectly towards her feet.)

I will obey thee in whate'er thou biddest me,
 So thou wilt look less stern. Shall I to hell,
 And take him with me living, as to heaven
 Went Enoch ? or shall I put poison in
 His food, or hang him on a bough ? or may I
 Entice him to his highest turret's top,
 And cast him thencefrom ? or, in human guise,
 Insult him (for he is both brave and choleric,
 And quails not at the wrath of any man)
 Until he draw his sword, when I will pierce him,

Right through his heart, in quick and angry duel ?
 I pray you let me finish him, sweet mistress.
 Shall I provoke him to excess in wine,
 Until he die of fever and delirium ?
 Bid me to rise and work ; for aught I 'll do
 To pleasure heaven and be dismissed by you.
 I pray thee let me hurl him 'gainst the moon,
 And leave him there to pine, and freeze, and shiver
 Till he expire ; or be it his hell forever.

ZELEHTHA.

Come.

MALZAH.

I implore thee let me kill him first ! —
 It cannot be that he shall live much longer ;
 Behold how gaunt he is. He would have killed
 David, and, by God's law, the murderer
 Devoted is to death ; so do thou make me
 God's instrument of justice ; O, be thou
 Just unto David, and to me show mercy.

*(Arising, and following ZELEHTHA.)**(Aside.)* Inexorable angel, it were bliss to curse thee !*[Exeunt MALZAH and ZELEHTHA.]*

SAUL.

'T is strange, most strange : how strange was its de-
 meanor !
 Would I had had the power to make it speak,
 Albeit of mischief it leered forth a volume.
 Or had I seen it sooner, that I might
 Have known from whence it issued ; whether it
 Came from the fabled pit, straight through the earth,
 Emerging even at my very feet, or
 Glode level o'er the lea like a marsh-meteor,

Or down the air shot like a falling star.
'T was as fantastic as a thing of moonbeams,
And looked most wicked ; 't is a son of murk,
Both by its mien and by its baneful work.
How it did come I know not ; but, at last,
It did appear to address itself to some one,
And crawled till it lay prone and agitated ;
Then rose and glided hence, like to a vapor
Attracted towards a cranny by a draft.
I shudder yet ; — but how have I grown steeled,
To have kept my senses in hell's very clutch !
Be still, ye trembling limbs ; post, fearful hour,
Into oblivion's arms ; perish, evil day,
And be no portion of eternity.
Thou dawn'dst in fear, and hast expired in horror.
O let me say no more upon this theme :
I could say impious things ; could pour derision
On prophets, I who 've twice myself had vision.
Let me within ; yet not attempt to sleep,
Lest yonder creature 'twixt my curtains peep.

[Exit

SCENE V.

An apartment in the palace.

SAUL.

If, in my fiend-fraught frenzy, I had killed him,
It had been well ; 't had not my conscience burdened,
Yet lightened much my heart. 'T is heavy yet,
For my presentiment is not unfounded.
My sudden aversion to him is an instinct,
Trustworthier than is fair inference.

From his past services. Why do I feel
This else irrational dislike of him ;
That shameful and unmanly dread, yea, even
Horror, when he is present, save from that
Intuitive and warning sense of peril,
Which, even whilst we are disporting with it,
Prompts us to kill or cage the toothless cub,
Ere it become the fanged, terrific lion ?
I once was but a herdsman, as he lately
Was but a shepherd. The wide distances
Between our first conditions and the throne
Are equal ; and Samuel hath withdrawn from me
Disloyally, whilst half the people's hearts
Go with him wheresoever he doth lead them.
May he not lead them to this martial shepherd ?
Nay, they are there already ! Those accursed,
Choral, and tripping nymphs proclaimed it. Now
All charmed away is disagreement's spirit ;
Which, in excess, is still a nation's weakness,
But, in due measure, is the monarch's strength.
His popularity exceeds all meed,
That such strange concord of opinion
Was never heard before in Israel,
Till one long note of praise rolls through the land,
None making dissonance ; and spirits such
As at my own election scorning asked,
" Can this man save us ? " laboring 'neath the spell,
Either hang mute or join the general hum.
I have heard say (and I do half believe it)
That apprehension brings its apprehending.
And so the javelin's flight, combined with those
Bold, dancing sluts' exaggerated praise,
Come to him doubly hinting : fear and hope ; —
The latter shows to him a shining entrance ;

The former, like a frightened idiot
Hurled on him from behind, impels him through it.
That maidens' chant may have inspired ambition.
Ah, now the film seems falling from mine eyes !
How know I but that the capricious creature,
Who visits me and gives me up to passion,
Intended, by this foul attack on David,
To goad him into treason ? May not now
Self-preservation prompt him to rebel ?
Fuel he had before, now he has fire,
For that suggestive chant may have brought in,
Unto his opening soul, the fagots of
Ambition, and this fiend of burning hell,
Couched in the flying javelin, have swept after,
And put into his hand a torch of hope
Wherewith to kindle them. Now let me dig
Within myself for a distasteful truth.
As flame cannot exist without the air,
So neither can ambition without hope ; —
Hope which this creature of the deep hath given him,
That he therewith may grow all warm and light,
Whilst I more dark and cold. It was a sad
Unlucky deed, that of the other day !
Now, doubtless, he is conscious that I fear him ;
And as a word, dropped in a hurried moment,
Will suddenly reveal a weighty secret,
So he will now my jealousy surmise.
Know we not, by the enemy's double guards,
The weak points of his camp ? So David now
Shall have perceived where I am vulnerable.
Ah, it is hard to overcome dark dread !
I know that God is with him, and suspect
He hath deserted me, or I'd ne'er feared.
I'll end this dread of David, though I may

Have called up a chimera to torment me.
Hither he comes : I 'm loath, yet I will do it.

(Enter DAVID.)

In a good time thou 'rt come ; we were of thee
Communing with ourselves. Thou shalt have Merab,
Our eldest daughter, given thee to wife ;
Only do thou be valiant, and fight
Jehovah's battles for us. Art content ?

DAVID.

Too well, your Majesty, am I content ; —
Already am too well repaid ; far, far
Too well rewarded ; I, who seek no more
Than simply here to serve the King, and still
Go out to fight Jehovah's battles. Then
Press me not to accept, too gracious King,
This honor ; what am I, and what indeed,
My life, or what my family, that I
Should seem unto my sovereign to deserve
To be his son-in-law ?

SAUL.

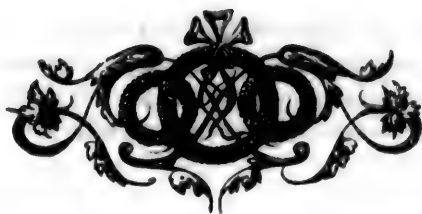
But we did promise 't

To him who should despatch the Giant Philistine.
But the Philistines even yet are giants ;
And do thou aid me by thy skill and valor,
Till we have dwarfed them into common men ;
For, by Jehovah and their own great Dagon,
We swear that we will humble the aggressors ;
Nor shall there be between us peace, till we
Have bound them to the shores of their own main.
Thou dost not answer us : — why, then, be dumb ;
And, growing in arms, our wish towards thee shall
come.

We have determined, and the force and worth
Of our resolves thou knowest. — Let us forth.
(*Aside*). The worst is passed ; and I will order so,
He shall his death to the Philistines owe.

[*Exeunt.*





ACT IV.

SCENE I.

A room in the palace. Enter JOKIEL and JARED.

JOKIEL.

Methinks this is about the time that Merab
Should have been given to David unto wife.

JARED.

That time is passed, and David little cares.
I tell thee David wishes not to wear
His earned honor ; — whether of humility
It come, or if from policy, I know not.

JOKIEL.

Art thou not young ? Dost thou not look abroad
With eyes that have but recently begun
To rub their smoothness 'gainst the roughening world, —
As the bright buttons of thy tunic rubbed
Against the desk whereat thou satt'st in school, —
And are they now so dull ? O, blind, like all
This last generation ! Why, man, the old cat
Can mouse a secret, yet, out of its hole,
And play with it, and kill and eat it too,

Before you youths can smell it. Listen now :
Nine days are kittens blind, and that's the term
Which, from creation, the whole mousing race
Have ta'en to suck and mew and meditate,
In darkness, on the days to them to come ;
And the whole breed which Tab produced to-day
Will see as clearly at their nine days' end,
As did the primitive engendering
(That, as then sin and death were not i' the world,
Did not exist, indeed, for mousing ends,
Nor cost their dams the grief of yeaning throes) :
But not so with these days' degenerate children ;
For, now, the darksome hours of infancy
Stretch into youth, and it is manhood's noon
Ere they can see what lies beneath their noses.
Pick up that pin, I pray thee, for it fell
Out of thy sweetheart's bodice, — yea, it did.
Fie, fie ; there are but two bright youths in Israel, —
Jonathan, one called, David, t' other. Jared,
Lend me the oyster-shell of thy right ear,
And in 't I'll whisper thee a secret pearl.
David desires not Merab ; but if Michal
Were offered him, 't would warm his seeming coldness,
And, to the very sea-marge of his neck, —
Like to the tide up to the ocean's brim,
At evening, 'neath the low and crimson sun, —
Would cause blush out to view his simmering blood.
I see thou'rt dark as ever : what wilt give me,
Cock of the morning, blind-worm of the dew,
To send swift dawn athwart thine ignorance' night ?
Thou dwell'st in midnight, boy ; — nay, more, thou canst
not
Tell me the hour : or whether it be midnight,
Or whether it be noon. What is thy wealth ?

What is the gross of all thy substance? Come,
Tell me the fee that thou canst yield to him
Who will withdraw the swaddles from thine eyes,
And leave thee staring in the light of heaven?

JARED.

I'd give to him the swaddles.

JOKIEL.

Wouldst thou? Well;
But what if he'd not take them?

JARED.

Let them lie.

JOKIEL.

Thou liest, Son of Midnight: thou wouldst keep them;
The parings of thy nails are precious to thee.

JARED.

As is thy secret unto thee; — thou keep'st it.

JOKIEL.

And shall, until thou draw'st it forth: come, man,
Divine, divine; — what, Jared, Jared, what!
Hast thou no vision? hast no eyes, no ears?
No intuitions, — none?

JARED.

Concerning David,
I have myself remarked the specialty
Of his respect towards Michal. What he doth
For Merab and for all the royal house,
He doth sevenfold for Michal, and delights in
The supererogation.

JOKIEL.

There thou hast it ; —

But I am doting surely ; yea, I dote
Now, verily, to talk thus unto thee.
This is no theme for runners of the palace,
Who straight will run it o'er all Gibeah.
It is not meet that I along with thee
Should crony thus, and take thy swinish ear.
It is not meet, that, touching David, I
Therein, like wavelets purling o'er a shell,
Should hint, assert, and, with prophetic tongue,
Declare what will be, or, at least, what might be,
If only those stern-humored household gods,
Fathers, were kind. — Son, I speak feelingly ;
Myself have been i' the Giant-killer's case,
And could have wished the nymph of my desires
Would have betasked me like a very slave,
Yea, sent me into Egypt to make bricks,
Provided that I might have thence returned,
And baked them in the sunshine of her eyes.
I could have wished most terrible strange things ;
Yea, most preposterous metamorphoses :
She unto me a lioness, and I, to her,
Her sole provider, — ay, her very jackal ;
She, unto me, some rich, luxurious land,
And I, to her, as its entire flotilla,
That, driven by oar or hugged along with wind,
Unto its shores brought tribute. Lo, the King.

JARED.

He sent me from him to perform an errand.

[Exit, and enter SAUL.]

SAUL.

Why lingered Jared with thee ? — he was sent
On business for Michal, who lacks patience.

JOKIEL.

He's young, your Majesty, and youth will have
 Its gibes at tacit age. Your Majesty,
 Ere now, hath doubtless seen an urchin raise
 A stone to throw at some poor harmless thing :
 A dove it may have been, or, likelier,
 Cat (and I own unto your Majesty
 That I, in youth, the latter have tormented),
 That crossed his path, or whose himself he crossed,
 Wandering to school, or on forgotten errand,
 Even as wanton boys will missiles fling
 At dove, or dog, or an espiéd cat,
 So passing youth will jests fling at meek age.
 Your Majesty, I know, will pardon me
 This bold recital and high colloquy,
 Wherein my tongue copes with your royal ear
 ('T was folly, true, in me to return 't in kind),
 But the green fledgling who just went from hence
 ('T was folly, certainly, to talk at all
 In such nice matter), yet we talked of Michal,
 And how that David secretly admires her,
 In secret pines, but dares not dream to have her.

SAUL.

Thou art officious, and thyself concernest
 With things that are beyond thee. Go ; the Queen
 Was asking for thee. Probably she wants
 From thee some tale, whose telling may bring back
 The slumber that has late forsaken her.
 Attend her, but talk not to her of David.

[Exit JOKIEL.]

I'll offer Michal to him for a snare ;
 And love shall lead him hoodwinked to his death :
 For, as her dowry, I will ask a hundred

Foreskins of the Philistines. He shall fall
Yet by their hands, not mine. Welcome to Saul.

(Enter a MINISTER of state.)

SAUL.

Because we know thee powerful in persuasion,
We shall employ thee in a delicate case,
'Twixt Michal and our favorite captain, David.
Preamble it as thou wilt ; say so and so ; —
Say all the house of Saul admire and love him ;
Say that the Queen's his friend (as well he knows),
And Michal too affects him ; that ourselves
(Whatever may have seemed to the reverse)
Regard him with all favor : tell him this,
And counsel him to be our son-in-law.
Now to him straight, for he is ruminating
There yonder in the garden. Speak not, go.

[Exit MINISTER.]

Let me not dwell upon this ugly theme ;
I love him though I act as if I hated.
'T is not my nature, yet 't is from my nature,
To which self-preservation is a law : —
Nor more its law than 't is the law of heaven,
To Moses' added, making up eleven.
Sad is the fate that does to this compel me !
Sad, sad that he must be pushed on to slaughter ; —
As sad to sacrifice my favorite daughter. [Exit]

SCENE II.

In the garden. Enter the MINISTER and DAVID conversing earnestly.

MINISTER.

Nay, hear me further, and then answer me.
Is 't not the highest duty of the subject
To obey his king?

DAVID.

Doubtless it is, my lord,
Granted the king command not aught forbidden.

MINISTER.

Even to the risking of that subject's life?

DAVID.

Such risk being for the king's or country's good.

MINISTER.

How much more, then, when such obedience
Is for that subject's honor and the land's
Great weal? List: Saul affects thee, though thou wert
By him passed by in Merab, whom, he knew,
Thou lov'dst not, so declined to recompense thee
In coin of her, which, if he had done, would
But have defrauded thee, to whom her value
Came not at its full standard: he affects thee, —
Whatever to the contrary has seemed, —
And all the royal house admire and love thee;
Her Majesty, and (what is of much weight)
Not Jonathan alone, but all Saul's sons.
Do thou accept, then, should Saul offer thee

(As I believe it is his gracious will)
The buxom, and yet proud and dainty, Michal,
Who, though she wears no *longing* in her looks,
It is surmised in secret pines for thee.

DAVID.

And thinkest thou it light for one like me,
Poor, and inheriting but some few sheep,
To mate in wedlock with the royal house,
That for its purse doth hold a kingdom's *coffers*?

MINISTER.

There's weight in that ; but it may be removed,
If all the parties to the noble contract —
Thyself, the people, and the house of Saul —
Should will it : for what could withstand such triple
Engine of lovers' hearts and parents' soul,
With nation helping it away to roll ?
No more at present ; I will now begone,
But talk upon this subject more anon. [Exit.

DAVID.

I do love Michal, and could go tend sheep
Again at Beth-lehem, might she go with me.
O selfish David, wouldst thou then debase her ?
Wouldst thou then cheat the King, her royal father ?
Who knoweth not the worth of his quick jewel,
To which his palace is the setting ring.
She burnishes the ingot of his court ;
Yea, wheresoever in the court she moves,
Dispenses riches from her dazzling beauty,
Till all flames like a mine. — I fear to indulge
What so surpasses my late wildest wish ;
For to be paid with her would *overpay* me.

This is the King's. He surely would not trifle
With me in Michal as in Merab! Nay,
If he should ask me, I will e'en say, yea. [Exit.

SCENE III.

The royal closet. SAUL and the MINISTER.

SAUL.

Tell him that we require no other dower
Than that which he can give, — a hundred foreskins
Of the Philistines; so that we may have
Revenge upon our foes, which is to us
More precious than much wealth in gold can be.

MINISTER.

I know he will obey the royal wish
Prompted thereunto by his own desire;
For it is known to me that he has long
Loved Michal, and he fears not the Philistines.
I'll to him straightway; and return to tell you
That he is gone, to take them by surprise.

[Exit MINISTER.

SAUL.

May he himself be now surprised! At last
May the foul genius of disaster meet him,
That he return no more! I love thee, David,
But love Saul better. Come he back alive,
And bring with him the foreskins in full tale,
Then shall I know that God or Devil's leagued
With him to fight against me. [Exit.

SCENE IV.

The court-yard of the palace. Enter TWO DOMESTICS.

FIRST DOMESTIC.

Dost thou not know that joyful wedding glee
Again is at the threshold of the court ?

SECOND DOMESTIC.

I do, and know that it within the palace
Shall enter if so happen ; but the bridegroom
Elect rides such a sharp-edged hazard towards
Her, who is bought with a hundred males' dishonor,
That I much doubt within myself if he
A bridegroom e'er in very deed shall be.

FIRST DOMESTIC.

Fear not for David ; for he hath around him
A panoply that no one sees, but which
Makes him invulnerable to the foe.
How often have we seen the King borne hither,
All pale and bleeding from the battle-field,
Suffering although victorious ; whilst David
From his recurring, bloody skirmishes
Returns uninjured.

(A sound of military music, and loud acclamations.)

List ! The air's heart beats ;
His drum ! Let's go : all Gibeah's on the streets.

[Exeunt, and enter SAUL.]

SAUL.

He is returned, whom I wished not return :
Alive too and unhurt ; fresh as becomes

A jocund bridegroom ; and he with him bears
The bloody dowry, doubled, from our foes :
So that the pit I willed him to fall into,
And lose himself therein with death and darkness,
Hath proved an eminence on which he stands
Like to a beacon lighted up afresh.
Men his augmented beam will see full soon,
And bless him, seeing it ; I, like the moon,
Before the presence of the rising sun,
Shall wane and fade before this deed last done.
He shall have Michal, though so great the cost
To see my child thus ever to me lost ;
For sure I am that there can never be
From me toward him but covert enmity.

[Exit



SAUL.

THIRD PART.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

SAUL, *King of Israel.*

JONATHAN, *his Eldest Son.*

ABNER, *Saul's Cousin, and a General in his Army.*

DAVID, *originally a Shepherd, now Saul's Son-in-law, a General in his Army, and eventually King of Israel.*

JESSE, *David's Father.*

SAMUEL, *High Priest of Israel.*

AHIMELECH, *a Priest.*

ABIATHAR, *his Son.*

DOEG, *an Edomite, Chief of Saul's Herdsmen.*

AHIMELECH, *the Hittite.*

ABISHAI, *David's Cousin.*

ACHISH, *King of Gath.*

MICHAL, *Saul's Daughter, and Wife of David.*

The Witch of Endor.

ZELEHETHA, *An Angel.*

ZAPH,
ZEPHO, } *Demons.*
PEVONA,

MALZAH, *The Evil Spirit from the Lord.*

COURTIERS, MESSENGERS, ZIPHITES, SOLDIERS, SAUL'S
ARMOR BEARER, &c.



ACT I.

SCENE I.

*Gibeah. The court-yard of the palace. Enter TWO COURT-
IERS.*

FIRST COURTIER.

Three suns hath Israel now to warm and light her, —
Saul, Jonathan, and David ; and her blood,
So liberally shed, shall be as rain
Upon her lands, henceforth thrice fruitful in
The doubled toil of husbandry secure.

SECOND COURTIER.

Auspicious is this marriage ; and the more so
Because it promises that there shall be
No difference of privilege in the tribes.
Judah and Benjamin already joined,
Says that the other scions of our race
Shall, in due season, be ingrafted on
The royal tree, that, with roots tempest-stricken,
Now gives us shelter 'neath its stately arms.

[Exeunt.]



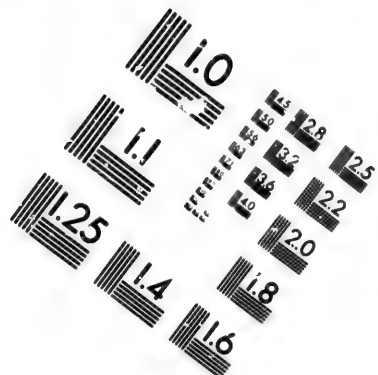
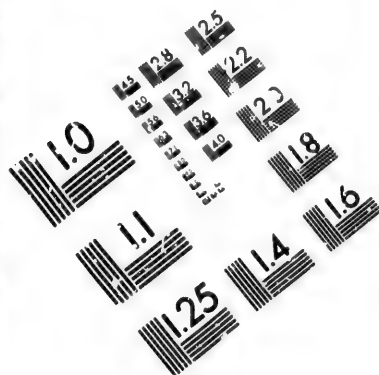
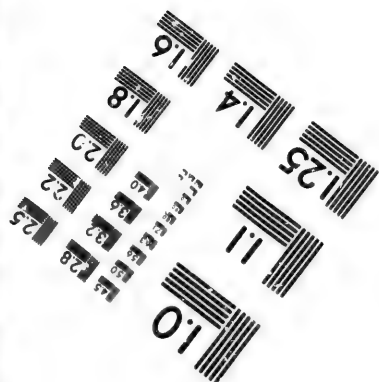
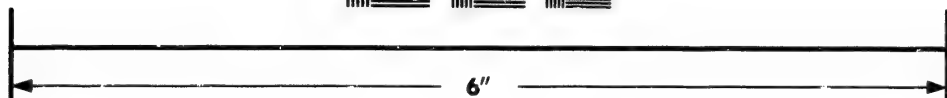
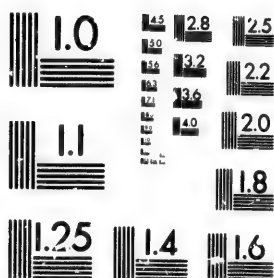


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SCENE II.

An apartment in the palace.

SAUL.

"Defeat, defeat," the court pronounce in whispers;
"Defeat," they low pronounce with eyes depressed,
As if the dreaded truth above them hung,
And unto it they raised not their regard,
Fearing to make assurance. Glad I'd lose
A battle, so that he might lose renown.
But let me not receive this seeming angel,
Lest it should prove to be—

(A noise heard.)

What noise is that?

MICHAL *(rushing in)*.

O, here he comes to tell you how the day,
Which we believed went lowering down on Israel,
Set in a flood of glory on our arms!

(Enter DAVID.)

O David, David, thou art welcomer
From this new victory (which comes threefold
On us, late sat in fog of feared defeat)
Than sunbeams in a dull November day.
Speak to him, father.

SAUL.

Thou'rt the minion, David,
Of the best fortune, whencesoe'er its source.
Yet had we heard reverse had come at last:
But, slow to credit it, we kept our mind
Calm and ebalanced 'twixt the dim extremes

Of chance defeat and likelier success ;
Well knowing, if it were indeed defeat,
We, with swift strides approaching the Philistines,
Would soon return it with high interest,
Paid down unto those warlike merchantmen.

DAVID.

No need of that : Jehovah never fails
To succor me ; for in mine own strength never
Do I contend, but, mailed in faith and prayer,
Meet those grim warriors from the ocean marge,
Expecting ever thus to overcome them.

SAUL.

Thou 'rt lucky in thy frame. To-morrow we
Will ask of thee particular recital
How the fight swayed, and how, as usual,
'T was won - sufficient, now, to know 't was won,
And that thou liv'st thyself to bear the news,
And, all unhurt, again art Michal's. Now
Hie home with her : 't is wrong to part you thus
So often in your newly married days ;
Which should be spent in soft and amorous fields, —
Sweet days that, spent, can nevermore return.
Go, go ; this is not meet. I, for a while,
Myself will keep Philistia in awe,
And, for my health's sake, make a few campaigns.
Michal, go with him. See thou cherish him,
As doth become a young and duteous wife.

MICHAL.

David, let's go. At home we'll talk together ;
And thou shalt tell me nine times over, love,
How went the course of this misstated field,
That has returned thee to me still unscathed.

SAUL.

Yes, tell her to the full : for women are
Most gluttonous in feeding on the tales
Their husbands tell them of their proper honor ;
But little thinking, in the same sweet hour,
How many a wife deplores her spouse disgraced.
Go ; such is war : — but ye can moralize
When ye are old and grown morose like me.

[*Exeunt* DAVID and MICHAL.]

If I can hinder by delays, he shall
Not yield thank-offering for his victory,
Nor for his safe return. If I can cause
A breach 'twixt him and heaven, 't will serve as well
As if he were, like me, besieged by hell.
How now ?

(Enter JONATHAN.)

JONATHAN.

David, I thought, was here.

SAUL.

He was.

What wouldst thou with him ?

JONATHAN (*aside*).

Question strange ! (*Aloud.*) Why, naught : —
Or, if he were here, I, perhaps, might greet him.

SAUL.

Beshrew thy greeting ! Hear me, slothful boy.
He has returned victorious, as wont :
The rumor of his overthrow was false.
Hadst thou been true unto thyself and me,
Thou wouldst in armor and wind-fanning plumes
Have dipped thee into this new ray of sunshine,

And left awhile the sports of concubines,
To play at least another game with men.

JONATHAN.

Have I refused ?

SAUL.

Refused ! thou shouldst forestall him.

But thou forgettest that thou art the heir
Unto a sceptre, that must be maintained
By those who wield it, or at length must drop
From out their hands, to be ta'en up by him
Who is esteemed, both by himself and others,
(And proves it by his realm-protecting deeds,)
More able and more worthy to retain it.

JONATHAN.

I hardly this expected.

SAUL.

Ponder it.

Ponder upon it, my forgetful son ;
Ponder't for thine afflicted father's sake ;
Who must again go forth unto the wars :
By day and night, in sickness and in health,
In heat and cold, in sunshine and in rain,
Walk the tent-covered field ; and in his age,
When he should sheltered sit and counsel only,
Have both the planning and the execution
(Along with Abner) of all enterprises,
Or them resign to David, — to his heir,
More fit than thou to fill the regal chair.
Did I say "enterprise" ? Alas, alas,
My sons possess it not, although I once
Believed them ablest of the sons of Israel
To adorn and keep the house which I have built :

But it must crumble, peradventure fall,
And bury in its ruins you and Saul ;
Who hath his sweat and blood for nothing spilt,
For others founded and for others built.
But David goes no more unto the war.

JONATHAN.

I do beseech you, father, if you love
Yourself, my mother, and my sister Michal,
Dismiss this dread of David from your mind.

SAUL.

I would dismiss him to the land of mind.
Knowest thou where that is ? I tell thee, boy,
If he live, thou diest. Dost thou wish to die,
Who knowest how sweet a life of glory is ?
Forgetful and degenerate, art thou
Our son ? if thou indeed art Jonathan,
With glory crowned at Geba and at Michmash,
Hearken to what I say ; and let it call thee
Back to thyself, like trumpet to the field.
Thou, whilst he lives, shalt no more glory taste ;
For whilst he dazzles thou canst not be seen.
He is between us and the people : hence
As a small matter held near to the eye
Hides the whole world besides, so David now
Hides all the merit of the house of Saul.
He shall be straight removed ; I say he shall.
I tell thee kill him. — I had done 't myself,
But —

JONATHAN.

But why ?

SAUL.

Because I will not do it, yet
It shall be done ; and very quickly too :

So do it thou and ease thy father's soul.
Think not upon 't, but do it. — Art thou craven?
'T were but one less on earth, one more in heaven.

[Exit.

JONATHAN.

O hideous counsel! Most ungrateful sire! —
But he is mad, — or the foul spirit hath
So venom'd him by its repeated stinging,
That, when 't is absent, still it in him works.
How black my father must esteem my heart!
A brother bid assassinate a brother.
No, though the victim were not my dear friend.
Shall I become a bravo, though my fee
Should be a father's bosom set at rest?
Rest! how could he then rest, with mind so guilty?
Ten thousand fiends would from that hour torment him;
And David's spirit, like a white-robed angel,
Would make them ply their task upon his conscience,
Till, in some moment of despair and anguish,
From these sky-scaling, ever gloomy towers,
These suicide-suggesting battlements,
He'd downward dash his body to the earth,
And hurl his soul to hell's perdition. O,
How can the soul of man become transformed!
How turn, self-changed, with black, ungrateful thoughts!
His son-in-law, his own child's husband, hers,
My sister's spouse! him whom she loves so dearly,
And at whose frequent absences she chafes;
Whom when at home, nigh to unseemliness,
Binds with her arms and clothes with her endearments!
O, monstrous, monstrous! Murder, thou art fair
As the Albino's pinky skin, compared
With the complexion of this Ethiop deed!
I will disclose this fatal scheme to David.

[Exit.

SCENE III.

An apartment in the palace. SAUL and certain RETAINERS of the court.

SAUL.

If you know one whom you believe I love not,
If he were near me lately, in this palace,
Though he might be somewhat to me akin, —
If there be such a one, deal with him as
You list. You know no enemy should live;
And whom I point out to your understandings
Should be no longer left to trouble me.
If you know such a one, crush him as you
Would crush a spider that you had observed
Slow creeping towards me as I ignorant slept;
A spider that, although you were aware
It could not harm me, notwithstanding would
Deserve the death for rash and filthy vermin.

A RETAINER.

Your Majesty, each would lay down his life
To purchase safety and repose for yours;
And him whom deem we baneful unto you
We would destroy.

SAUL.

We understand each other.

Now go.

[*Exeunt RETAINERS.*]

Ay, go, ye hypocrites; begone.

I could perceive they mocked me: — they'll to David.
Well, let them go; and when they here return,
Should I discover in them aught amiss,
I'll send their ghosts to show the way to his. [Exit]

SCENE IV.

*An apartment in the house of David. Enter JONATHAN,
DAVID, and MICHAL.*

JONATHAN.

Dear sister, for a while retire ; for I
Have with me business to which no ear
Save David's must be privy.

MICHAL.

Business

Should be transacted in its proper place :
The mart's for traffic, and the council chamber
Or royal closet for the state's great secrets.

JONATHAN.

Wise sister, leave us, for I must not tarry.

MICHAL.

I am most glad of that. Be light your theme
As brief : I count you here a trespasser.

[Exit MICHAL.

JONATHAN.

David, my brother, bring I heavy news.

DAVID.

What, is the evil spirit on the King ?

JONATHAN.

Nay, worse.

DAVID.

He is not dead ? I prithee speak.

JONATHAN.

No, but he seeks thy life ; and now not in
His blind, demented fury, as I fear, —

But in a cool, absurd antipathy.
Nay, look not so incredulous ; 't is true.
So hide thyself forthwith until the morn ;
When I will join my father, as he takes
His early airing, and will speak of thee,
And tell thee afterwards what I have learned.

DAVID.

O my divining eyes ! I saw he 'd evil
Within him toward me ere I left the palace.

JONATHAN.

Leave here, too, quickly ; hide thyself at once :
For his resolves are like unto sharp arrows
Already on the bowstring, and, whilst others aim,
His thoughts in deeds are shot.

DAVID.

I know his promptness :

I know too, that, of late, he loathes or fears me ;
Me, who am ever prompt to risk my life
That his may not be perilled.

JONATHAN.

Speak not thus : but

Go, since thou know'st his act pursues his word,
As thunder lightning ; — yea, far surer, for
Oft the report doth fail the flash, but never
His execution does his threatening.
Take not thy leave of Michal ; I 'll excuse
Thee to her. Go conceal thyself till morning ;
Whilst I return and watch my sire, to save thee.

DAVID.

I cannot be in danger ! — no ; far from it.

JONATHAN.

Muse not : why shouldst thou stay to be destroyed,
Like the poor field-mouse, ling'ring in its nest,
Caught by the coming ploughshare ?

DAVID.

Has it come

To this ! — to be compelled to fly, like him,
The ever-banished felon, who, by night
And stealth, returns unto his native eaves ?
What have I done to earn thy father's malice ?
What left undone, that I should this endure ?

JONATHAN.

O, spare me these keen questionings, dear friend !
But Saul hath not spared thee ; — yet go thy way,
While I excuse thy going as I may.

DAVID.

I will begone ; yes, Jonathan, I go ;
But in an evil and a bitter mood :
Deep, deep the sting goes of ingratitude.

[*Exeunt, different ways.*]

SCENE V.

The grounds of the palace. Time, morning. Enter MALZAH, languidly ; and presently SAUL and JONATHAN, walking silently together.

MALZAH.

Ah, weary ! I am called the laughing devil.
Yet I walk up and down existence weeping.
But what when demons disbelieve their eyes,

And their false ears for jests take my bewailings?
Even Peyona does not know me truly,
Nor ever will; — I do not know myself;
I have so many moods, that I know not
Which of them shows the veritable Malzah.
But this I know, my gladness always borders
Upon the doleful region of the dumps. —
Ah, me!
How like is man unto the fallen angels!
How many in my mood now walk this world!
Some sullen at their fellows, some at fate, —
From which there is no more escaping than
There is from our free wills; and some are sad
With envy at another's good, and some
With unfulfilled ambition; some with hate
Are sad, and some with love unlucky; some
With fear of missing heaven, some with dread
Of falling into hell; and many more
With curious worldly cares: — and here come Saul
And Jonathan, and both of them dejected.
We were a mournful trio, should I join them:
Grave as three owls, as sober as three storks,
More gloomy than a trinity of ravens.
In spirit, truly pitiful they show;
Portentous in appearance as yon heavens;
Or as two doctors, weighing if their patient
Shall die or live. I will approach, and listen.

SAUL.

Wherefore art thou so silent?

JONATHAN.

Heavy thoughts

Hang on my spirit, as those murky clouds

Hang on the horizon ; and, as the sun's rays
Cannot now reach the vapor-covered ground,
Cannot my sorrow reach, in words, your ears.

SAUL.

What meanest thou ?

JONATHAN.

I have a sister Michal

SAUL.

Thou hast, and what of that ?

JONATHAN.

And she a husband.

SAUL.

I know it.

JONATHAN.

Whom you wish assassinated.

SAUL.

Cover the conception with a fairer word ;
And bring not unto me, in bloody grave-clothes,
The corse of David.

JONATHAN.

Deed as foul as that
Which, yesterday, was unto me suggested
Cannot be styléd fair. Things are the same,
However daintily the tongue approach them.
Bitter is bitter, though the lips be not
Allowed to wry themselves thereat. O father,
Let us not do that which we dare not mention,
And, for our future days, beget a monster
Of which the embryo merely and foreshadow
Already horrifies us. My dear father,

Towards David change your mind ; and let down drop
To hell the vile suggestion, whence it came.

SAUL.

Thou know'st not what thou sayest ; peace, son, peace.

JONATHAN.

There is no peace when mutters the black storm.
You would o'erwhelm our house by this foul deed ;
Would so affront the cloud and wind of heaven,
That its already lowering indignation
Should burst and deluge you, your wife, and children,
And in its whirlwind overturn your throne.

SAUL.

Thinkest thou so ?

JONATHAN.

O, think on his good deeds
Towards you and towards us all ; think how his life
He perilled with the giant, — sole he slew him,
And none thereat did more rejoice than you.
He hath not done you any evil since,
But fought your foes, while you in peace have slept ;
And when again he is re-rendered here,
Back from the violent field and harsh alarms,
How fondly flows the music of his harp,
To heal or soothe your ailment ! You 've no child
Of your own blood who is more dutiful ;
And if your people love him, you no less
They love ; but ever since he wed my sister,
His glory goes to augment the common stock
Of the young royal house and dynasty,
Whereof yourself foundation are and root.
Why should you wish him slain ? Slay me and Michael ;

But bring not on yourself and on our line
Their curse who shed a benefactor's blood.

SAUL.

¶Prythee no more of this ; I have relented :
Though tenderness towards him, perhaps, is harshness
Towards thee and all our house. His life is safe.

JONATHAN.

And safer is our house, since this offence
Shall rot not its foundation.

SAUL.

Go thy way ;

It was for this thou joinedst me. [Exit JONATHAN.

We are weakest

When we are caught contending with our children !

Not tongue of wisest minister, nor yet

The music from the brave Bethlehemite's

Persuasive lips, that emulate the strings

Of his own harp, himself in agony,

With wet and upturned eyes, upon his knees,

Pleading for life, could ever thus have turned me.

Let him bring David to me ; I'll receive him. [Exit.

MALZAH.

Perchance thou wilt at length of life bereave him.

[Exit.





ACT II.

SCENE I.

Gibeon. The court-yard of the palace. Enter Two OFFICERS of the royal household.

FIRST OFFICER.

'T is said that the Philistines,
Those restless dwellers near the salty main,
Again are pushing inland. As the rain
From their own bounding ocean sweeps our plains,
So do their light troops recommence to shower
Across our border.

SECOND OFFICER.

David is departed,
To drive them back as quickly as they came.
David is to them as a mountain which
The clouds must clear ere they can feed old Jordan.
They break themselves against him, whilst he stands
Unbroken, and their remnant hurleth home,
Like scattered vapors, that, at change of wind,
Return to fall in drops into the sea.

FIRST OFFICER.

They are a dangerous race, and sleep in armor.
One hand for lucre is, and for the sword
The other, —

(Enter a COURIER, crossing the court-yard in haste.)

Say, what news? Sir, briefly tell us.

COURIER.

David again hath overthrown the foe.

SECOND OFFICER.

So soon?

FIRST OFFICER.

We dreamed not he had met them yet.

COURIER.

He fell upon them ere they were aware,
And through a river of their own shed blood
Drove them, half drowned in slaughter. — Stay me not:
This news is for the hearing of the King;
And afterwards the town may with it ring.

[Exit COURIER.]

SECOND OFFICER.

O David, valiant captain, wise and young!

FIRST OFFICER.

The King is swift, but David swifter still.

SECOND OFFICER.

He rises suddenly as doth the whirlwind,
And leaves us wondering at his prompt achievement;
E'en as we wonder at the smoking ruin
The lightning hath just made before our eyes.
Let's to the city, and there spread the news.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II.

*The palace. A room commanding a view of the streets;
SAUL pacing to and fro, and an ATTENDANT standing
near a window. Acclamation without.*

SAUL.

What noise is that we hear so wild without ?

ATTENDANT.

Your Majesty, it is a gathering crowd,
Shouting at the approach of David, who
Again victorious comes. They throw their turbans
Into the air until 't is filled with them.
The streets are filling with the throng, that flows
Thereinto like swift sea-waves into dikes
Whose sluices are drawn up ; that soon they 'll be
No more paved streets, but one huge, head-paved sea.

SAUL.

Now get thee gone ; I do no longer need thee.

[Exit ATTENDANT.]

I swear again that he shall die ! Why did
I spare him when before I had so sworn ?
Why have I sworn his life should still be safe
To please that fool, his fond dupe, Jonathan ?
I 'll break all wordy barriers, all oaths,
If they shall stand between me and my will.
Let Jonathan beware, or he may suffer
By standing now 'tween David and my fury.

[Exit, and enter MALZAH from the opposite side.]

MALZAH.

Now surely he'll kill David, and thus end
My slavery ; for I will enter him
On wings of blackest murder, and so fuse
With him in his infuriated mood,
That we will work together as one soul.

*[Exit, and enter DAVID in armor in company with the
QUEEN.]*

QUEEN.

O, thou art welcomer than the tidings were
That told us of thy victory ! Thou hast wings
Surely, and hastened to our nest, as though
Thou knewest the King would need thee. To him
straight ;
For he is tending towards his old distemper,
And in yon airy turret, like an eagle,
Now sits alone black-brooding. *[Exeunt.]*

SAUL.

*(Entering, having thrown a javelin at DAVID, who has es-
caped as before.)*

Now may a palsy light upon this arm,
For it has lost its skill ! Scathe it, ye skies,
Wither, ye worthless sinews, knot with cramps !
He came unto his doom, — pshaw, pshaw, I've marred it !
But I will hound him out where'er he be.

(Enter an OFFICER and SOLDIERS.)

Go, seize the avenues to David's house,
And slay him as he issues in the morning.

[Exeunt OFFICER and SOLDIERS.]

Now am I filled with malice to the crown ;
Till I've no room for pity, nor can enter
Thaw-wind at crack or cranny of my frame,

To melt my frozen heart into remorse.
All kindness' fire is out, all's dark i' the house :
But I will grope unerring to my victim ;
Toward whom I now will be as stern as are
The elements of nature, that ne'er swerve
From their fixed attributes for mortal thing.
How shall I wait till morn doth tidings bring !

MALZAH (*entering*).

Let me hide myself forever as a bungler !
I am ashamed, and Saul too is ashamed.

SAUL.

Why did my arm so shake ? — it was not weak,
But as surcharged with strange, unnatural force.

MALZAH.

Ha, ha ! 't is well, 't is well. Ha, ha ! ha, ha !
He herein not suspects me ; I'm not blamed.
Let me not laugh ; -- indeed, I cannot laugh.
Ah, weary ; I shall never more be cheerful.
I cannot laugh nor sing, and weep I will not ;
Yet, had I the gift of rhythm and of rhyme,
Sighs should keep measure, and dropped tears beat time.
O for an eye of water, — tongue of fire !
Go, go ! go, go ! O, inexpressive fiend !
I cannot howl divinely, nor laugh uncouthly,
As some do in their agony ; I cannot whine ;
Nor will I rave as others : I am dumb,
Impatient waiting for the things to come.

SAUL.

Would I could sleep, or die, till it were done !
I'll get to bed. [Exit.]

MALZAH.

Ay, prithee do, poor King.

Whither go I ? shall I hang i' the spider's web,
And therein sleep ; or take the feline form,
And wink and doze upon the eaves i' the moonlight ?
O to lie down on the marge of fabulous Lethe !
Or with Peyona on a bank in hell,
Where fiery flowers bloom in unholy dell ! [Exit.

SCENE III.

*An upper room in DAVID's house. Time, night. A lamp
burning.*

MICHAL (*discovered, seated*).

Cease, ye vile wars, ye perillers of his life.
Cease, ye fierce foes, or David cease to quell you.
Out of my sky, ye war-clouds, roll away,
That into night again have turned my day.
Ye purple-robed and rich inhabitants,
That populous make the margent of the sea,
Peace, and restore my husband unto me.

(*Enter DAVID.*)

My prayer i' the instant answered ? It is he : —
O David, do I clasp thee once again ?
Let me look on thee : 't is an apparition : —
O, 't is the apparition that I love !
Yes, I now hold thee : art thou here unscathed ?

DAVID.

The Lord in my last peril did stand by me.

MICHAL.

O season of disquiet turned to joy !
This hour for days requites me. Sit, love, sit.
They tell me that I am too fond of thee.
Perhaps I am ; — and yet not fond enough.
O, thou art dear unto me ; — yet wert not
Dear, wert thou purchased with tenfold such fondness !
But let them talk, who know not what they say ;
For what care I for prudes who never knew
Illapse into the lunacy of love ? —
O, but you look most soberly to-night !
Come, get these soiled accoutrements from off thee ;
Love will not dally in such horrid gear.
Let me unbind thy sandals : now I vow
That were it not for their dear wearer's sake,
I'd burn them, that have borne thee so far from me.
Give me thy helmet ; — I could burn it too,
But for the head 't has shielded. Fie on war :
It is the foulest pastime that you men
Delight in. — Ah, how easily I take
Thy casque from where it sits so seemingly.
I do remember when I had to climb
Ere I could take my father's from his brow.
Stay, let's dispose these war-disordered locks : —
Nay, do not think my lips shall challenge yours,
For 't were a pity to disturb their silence.
O, but you 'll talk when I have done, I know.
You are o'erspent by this last swoop ; but thou
My eagle art in thy nest, nor shalt thou leave it
Till downiest embraces have repaid thee
For half the iron rigors of the war.

(Enter a female SERVANT, and stands by the door : MICHAL goes to her.)

SERVANT (*in an undertone*).

O my dear Princess !

MICHAL.

Well, what now ?

SERVANT.

The King

Your father has beset the house with soldiers ;
So that when out my master goes at morn,
They may at once arrest him.

MICHAL.

'T is the old madding :

Get thee to bed.

SERVANT.

Pray let me watch with you :
They say the King projects our master's death.

MICHAL.

No ; get to bed.

[Exit SERVANT.

(*Aside.*) Now what new demon's this ?

'T is the cold spirit of ingratitude,
Come from the thawless region of the north.
What can be done in such a strait ? I know
'T is dangerous to trifle with my father.
O, it is foul, is foul of him, is foul ! —
And in this wild, desiring hour too ; now
Clad in the white robe of my exultation,
To come and crape me over with black weeds ;
Make me a widow in reality,
Which, all for him, I've half been since my nuptials.
My lord shall stay ; my father dares not touch him : —
And yet I know not what he dares not do.

The miserable lunatic ! (*Aloud.*) O David,
David, I fear that thou, mine own sweet singer,
My bird just to my bosom, must this night
Break from the cage and compass of my arms !

DAVID.

What hath she told thee ? tell me what hath happened.

MICHAL.

Nay, nay, I cannot think but that thou knowest.
'Tis but a little : save thyself to-night,
Or else to-morrow it may be too late.
My father's ta'en a fancy to thy death,
And round the house has posted guards to take thee
As out thou goest in the morning. Nay,
I see thou knowest : — well, well, get thee gone.

DAVID.

O Michal, I do fear that now no spirit,
Except his own, doth animate thy father.
We will not chide him ; but thyself art witness
Whether I have ever breathed against him wrong.
He seeks my life for naught, — except, indeed,
I do offend him by exposing it
So much for him and his. Weep not till I
Am gone.

MICHAL.

Thou shalt not go ; I say thou shalt not : —
No, let him come himself ; I will withstand him.

DAVID.

Prevent me not.

MICHAL.

I will prevent thee. Stay,
I will contend with this capricious King.

DAVID.

He is thy father, and the Lord's anointed.

MICHAL.

He shall not drive thee forth. — O just Jehovah !

DAVID.

Peace, peace.

MICHAL.

There is no peace ; but tears, tears, tears.

DAVID.

There will be leisure for them when I 'm gone.
We'll manage this alone, and quietly,
So shall thy parent have less scandal thrown
Upon his name. Speak me to Jonathan.
Tell him I love him more the more his father
Hates me : and that I do love thee, his sister,
And my own proud and yet obedient wife,
Needs no asseveration now by me,
Who have from thee received proofs sweet and many
Of loving duty ; add thou, then, another,
By lowering me from this dim balcony,
That in the darkness I may 'scape in safety.

MICHAL.

Darker grows Israel, and darker. David,
Thy words to me have lifted up a veil,
And I behold my father's countenance
Looking so horribly deformed, I fear
To gaze upon its grimness. O frail king ! —
Unnatural man ! — But he is weak of mind,
Has fallen to utter feebleness in judgment,
Though yet, in passions, terrible and strong.

DAVID.

Let 's pity and forgive him ; but 't is hard

For me to leave thee to the fury of
His disappointed malice, that to-morrow
Will break against thee in a storm of anger.
Now let us kiss and take our sudden leave.
There, there ; no more endearments : fare thee well.
The worst seems passed. Thy kiss thy love-pledge be,
And mine the sign thy sire's forgiven by me.
Now, let me down, I pray thee.

MICHAL.

Tarry yet.

DAVID.

I will, if thou desire it.

MICHAL.

O no ; go.

Thou art not safe a moment in this house ;
For if my father should bethink him, he
Would come at once himself and seize upon thee.

DAVID.

Then help me from such sore contingency.

(They advance to the balcony.)

The heavens seem one archangel ! the countless stars
Appear to me as many cherubs' eyes
That watch, love, for my safety. God is yonder,
Although I see him not, and looking down
Benignly ; and where'er I go, be it
By night or day, in Canaan or beyond it,
He will watch o'er and keep me.

(MICHAL lowers him from the balcony.)

MICHAL.

O, now come night indeed, and let hoarse thunders
Bellow and drown my cries. Ye lightnings, shoot ;
Let, through the black waste of the frosty air,

Your flashes reach and blind this wicked father!
No tears ; — I will not weep ; but I will howl,
Ay, howl my fill, for vengeance and for David.
Covered with martial glory ; — O, let hell's smoke
Blacken it, rather than it gild my sire ! —
Ere on my lips had died the gratulations ;
While the hot kisses that he meeting gave me
Thereon yet live in feeling ; — can it be ?
I have been dreaming all this half-hour, surely,
And am not yet awake ; David ! ho, David ! —
O, let me now be stifled, or I shall
Awake the slumbering echoes of the night,
Till David's name shall ring midst Gibeah,
And he return to ask me why is this.
So little time ! so much to have been done !
But now he went to meet the enemy ;
But now he did pursue the flying foe :
Now he's pursued himself. O these but nows !
He's homeless now ; his home hath cast him out.
Ingratitude ! thou worst of demons, thou
Favor-forgetting fiend, cold wolf ! — nay, nay,
The wolves methinks thus drive not forth their cubs.
O, I could rend my insane father's form,
And let him see I too can play the fury.
Is he the King ? Then am I not his daughter ?
Is not my husband I ? O terrible
Despatch ! — No more, no more of that ; I feel
I too have rising in me a foul spirit.
Silence, poor Michal ! know thy proud reunion,
Thy sunrise of new nuptials, is bleak night,
Thy marriage black divorce. Saul — father — but
I will not curse thee ; — no, but I will chide him,
And rate him, at my pleasure, with my tears.
Has he forgotten his partings with my mother ?

And how he kissed me and my sister Merab,
Ere he went forth to battle? Has he forgot
All that? forgot his wife and children? all?
Has he forgot who charmed him from the demon?

(After weeping in silence.)

I will deceive this madman parent now:
I shall be justified: I will deceive him,
And any whom he may hereto despatch;
For in the stead of him whom I had thought
That I this night should shelter in my arms,
Yet now is lurking shelterless and cold,
I'll place a senseless image in the bed;
And when my father's messengers demand him,
I'll say that he is sick, and so say truth;
For he is sick, and sick they'll see am I.
I'll do it, and so gain breathing for my husband.

[Exit.]

SCENE IV.

A room in the palace. Time, morning,

SAUL.

'Tis now past daybreak, and he rises early.
Hath he escaped them too? or does his fond
Wife Michal hold him thrall'd, to take her fill
Of his fair body after her brief fasting?
Poor child, she soon will have more fasting; for
I will not break my fast till it be done.

(Enter the OFFICER and SOLDIERS.)

How now? Where is he? Have you left him dead?

OFFICER.

Your Majesty, he's sick, so Michal says,
And keeps his bed.

SAUL.

Back with you instantly ;
And bring him to us on his bed, that we
May do unto him what you should have done. —
You have not seen him, — have you ?

OFFICER.

No, my liege.

SAUL.

So thought we. Go, 't is a convenient sickness :
But he shall yet be sicker. Away with you.

[Exeunt OFFICER and SOLDIERS.]

Away, white thoughts ! how can I let him live ?
See how the sun comes up in fulgent red,
And shows what is my course's proper hue.
Now if they bring him not, I 'll slay them also.

(Enter a SERVANT.)

Is the Queen astir ?

SERVANT.

She is, your Majesty.

SAUL.

Tell her that I am better : bid her keep
Her chamber.

[Exit SERVANT.]

'T is not meet that she should witness
His death ; for she would raise such stout resistance
That I might kill her too ; and then, — why then
I should destroy myself, and all for nothing,
Except my own damnation : then I 'd done
At least one murder, — for I will not count
The killing of mine enemy a murder ;
But to kill her, — O, 't were to kill ten friends !
Shall I wait here and let him still escape me ?

No, to the fiends go all compunction ! now
I go to seize him in his den, and send
His soul whereunto souls departed wend. [Exit]

SCENE V.

*A corridor and staircase in DAVID's house. MICHAL, the
OFFICER and SOLDIERS, near the door of DAVID's bed-
chamber.*

MICHAL.

But that you stand as proxies of my father,
I with these woman's hands would hurl you down.
For shame, like brutal ruffians to attempt
To violate the chamber of the sick. —
Nay, if you will, you enter over me.

OFFICER.

Lady, refrain ; for, as you justly said,
We represent the King ; and do not dare
Return to him unless we have your husband.

MICHAL.

Take him, then, if you find him there within.

(The OFFICER and SOLDIERS enter the bedchamber.)

FIRST SOLDIER *(within)*.

Here is no David, only an image, abed !
And far less fair than he too. He is gone.

SECOND SOLDIER.

Now there will be the King's best rage to do ;
And help him will his demon.

THIRD SOLDIER.

O these women,
They are the very devil for cunning! See you,
How she has helped the lame dog o'er the stile!
A bolster of goat's hair, and cloth o'er all!
We must not tell the King that he's escaped:
He'd javelin us.

(Re-enter the OFFICER and SOLDIERS.)

OFFICER.

Good Princess, tell us sooth;
Where is your husband? for the King will have him.

MICHAL.

Good! Should I now be good were I to tell you?
Let the King come himself and question me;
I'll answer you no further.

(A noise heard below.)

SECOND SOLDIER.

He is here.

OFFICER.

Now pray, your Highness, do not mock your father;
For he is in a very fatal humor.

(Enter SAUL.)

SAUL.

How now, unduteous? let me see thy husband.
They tell me he is sick, and I've a cure for him.

MICHAL.

Ah, little care you for him, sick or cured;
He who erenow has cured you in your sickness.
He is not here.

*SAUL.**SAUL.*

Minion, what hast thou done ?

MICHAL.

My duty unto him who claims it foremost.

SAUL.

That is myself ; that is thy father, Michal ;
That is thy sovereign. Tell me where he is.

MICHAL.

I know not where he is : I know not you,
I know no father, and I know no sovereign,
Who would compel me not to know my husband :
For to reveal him now were to forget him.
But go, O man, and let me see no more
Those murderous looks. I know not where he is,
For you have driven him from me ; and may he
Never return to do you further service,
Ungrateful king ! — Nay, I can bear thy frown ;
For I've beheld this moment on thy face
My husband's murder. Ah, I know your heart ;
I know what your intent was ; — but he's gone ;
So do your worst on me, for I am bold
As you this hour are barbarous.

SAUL.

Spoiled child,

Be not too bold, nor trust the o'erstrained tie
Of consanguinity. I find thou art bad
As he : take in thy sail in time, sweet craft.
You are two vessels pressed on by the storm :
And though he has slipped his cable and is scudding
Before the wind, dream thou not tempt the sea ;
For I, his storm, at anchor will retain thee,

And may too blow upon thee to thy hurt, —
Yea, for aught I know, sink thee. Whither hath
He fled, girl?

MICHAL.

Nowhere. He would scorn to flee;
He left this at his leisure.

SAUL.

O thou viper!

*(Attempts to seize her.)*OFFICER *(rushing between them and holding SAUL)*.

Your Majesty, be calmed. — O, now between you
I, a poor soldier, stand, and in this breach,
Here in this royal and unnatural quarrel,
Perhaps may fall: — e'en let me fall; but still,
O Israel, lead not thus to the assault
On that fair citadel your august self;
Nor us command who now would follow you,
Against our enemies, on any hope,
Howe'er forlorn.

SAUL.

She is mine enemy!

OFFICER.

O no, my liege; but now be soothed. Remember
Whilst you thus wrangle David is escaping.
O, be composed. I dare not liberate you,
Although I know this all a mockery;
That in your grasp myself would be a sparrow
Within the clutching talons of an eagle.
Forgive me, O forgive this sacrilege,
In laying hands upon the Lord's Anointed!
But 't is to hinder you from desecrating

That graceful wing of your own hallowed temple:
I but restrain you from yourself. See how
She weeps. O, there is much excuse for her:
All creatures madden when they are bereaved.
She is your daughter, and this hardy spirit
Of hers is but a fragment from the rock
Of your own steadfast soul, that hath withstood
Both foes from desert and from salty flood.

SAUL.

Unhand me now ; for I am calm once more.
These women are the marplots of our lives,
For when we will they will not. Tell me, thou ;
Are all wives e'en so froward ?

OFFICER.

Well my liege
Knoweth, and others, like my liege, well know,
Her mother is as gentle as the dove ;
And that herself is playful as the lamb
When sunshine's on her pasture. If she bleats now,
Why, 't is her nature, and the gift of women ;
Whose tongues, amidst the sweet strains of their music,
Will sometimes sound a flat or note discordant.

SAUL.

Tell me, thou false one, where has fled thy husband ?

MICHAL.

He did not tell me where he meant to go.
I cannot tell ; and if I could I would not :
So there are double bars upon my lips.
And should you kill me and take out my heart,
That you might look into its closet, you 'll
Not find him in it, though he will be there.

SAUL.

Now, by the furnace of mine anger's fires,
To which thou addest fuel, speak not thus,
For fear I take thy life instead of his ; —
Yea, having, impious, tasted of such blood,
I then, from very piety, pursue him,
And, having overta'en him, take his life
As an atonement for thy ill-timed death.
Say, whither hath thy husband fled ?

MICHAL.

Would you
Then have me drag my husband forth to slaughter ?

SAUL.

Tell me, or yet I'll yield thee to my vengeance ;
That, when he comes to find thee, it shall be
With him as even now with me, he'll find
The one he seeks for missing.

MICHAL.

Thus he said,
When I would have restrained him (thus you place me
Between two meeting perils of fire and water),
He said unto me fiercely, " Let me go ;
For wherefore should I kill thee ? "

SAUL.

This is false ;
For thou wouldst harness him the untamed winds,
And yoke them to the chariot of the night,
For his escape, so much thou dost affect him.
Avaunt ! I'll watch ; and if thou succor him,
I will not say to thee what I will do,
But my frame shudders at the unuttered deed.
Come on ! he shall be hunted.

[*Exeunt SAUL, OFFICER, and SOLDIERS.*

MICHAL.

O, hard to bear! a husband's mortal hazard;
A father darkly threat'ning me with murder,
For what else could he hint at? O, too much
To have to bear this sudden load of anguish!
Yet not enough to bear for thee, my David;
My David laden by my ingrate father.
O David, loved more by me than 's my father:
O, altered father; O, now lawless man!
Return, thou altered father, thou now lawless man;—
Yes, yes, let Saul return, let Saul return,
And rage against me like the storm 'gainst Carmel,
Yea, let him come and in his fury seize
Me by the hair and drag me to his feet,—
As the grim storm might seize the battlements
Of his own palace, and dash them in the dust,—
I would not tell him of one rood (did I know it)
Of the way, David, that thou wentest. [Exit.]





ACT III.

SCENE I.

Gibeah. A room in the palace. SAUL and a COURTIER.

SAUL.

Why lingerest thou, if business be done ?
Why must I bid thee go ? We've little taste
Now left for gossip when affairs are ended.
What hast thou on thy tongue, that thus thou standest
With parted lips yet silent ?

COURTIER.

Pardon me ;
David now dwells with Samuel in Naioth.

SAUL.

Ah, he crops out at last ! Go thou, and take
Soldiers along with thee, and bring him hither.
If thou but capture him, alive or dead,
I'll put live honors blooming on thy head.

[*Exit* COURTIER.]

I'll follow him unto the utmost corner
O' the earth, but I will have him in my power ;
And when that is, he troubles me no more.
I know this parasite will hold him hard ;
For what will not men do for a reward !

[*Exit*]

SCENE II.

The borders of a grove at Naioth. SAMUEL and a company of young PROPHETS chanting. Enter the COURTIER and SOLDIERS, with MALZAH in the midst of them.

MALZAH.

I 'm now become the veriest drudge,
From Gibeah to Naioth made to trudge :
And all to be a pitch-pipe to these fellows.
O, to be leader unto such a choir !
Why brought they not with them the town-crier ?
This seems a very mockery of my woes. —
But what needs must be must be, so here goes.

Air by MALZAH, the COURTIER, and SOLDIERS.

In this retreat doth Levi dwell,
And welcomes him who came distressed ;
Amidst these sacred scenes awhile
The fugitive doth safely rest.
Here we would rest and praise the Lord,
At ordered hour, with sweet accord !
The Lord, eternal, great, and feared, —
Of all those boys, none had a beard.

MALZAH.

I 've changed their strain, —
Perhaps earned myself a peck of pain.
But wherefore should I balk my humor ?
I will no longer here remain,
Nor play for Heaven the moody mummer !
Halloo !
Ye fag-end and subservient crew,
That will to aught your voices screw !

See, Samuel, meth you severe : —
He puts my saucy soul in fear.

SAMUEL.

Who and whence are you, that, conspiring, come
To these sequestered and religious shades,
Intent to mock our rites?

MALZAH (*aside*).

I mock not them
Nor thee, prophetic, hoar, and reverend being,
Who, in the majesty of virtue, standest,
Here in this still recess and wooded vale,
Serenely girt by thy young ministering band ;
Even as the midnight moon, when she, full orb'd,
Hangs in the heaven's blue hall, what time the Night,
Along with her and some selectest stars,
Holds court unseen by the dull, slumbering world ; —
But I am wroth, and will sweep through these men
Like lightning, so that they not breathe again.

[MALZAH *vanishes*, and the COURTIER and SOLDIERS
drop to the ground.

MALZAH (*again visible*).

I have not power their life to spill :
I hear them loudly breathing still.
And, lo, Zelahtha through the air
To Gibeah warns me to repair : —
O, to be dragged against my will,
To be her moping vassal there !

[*Exit*.

SAMUEL.

There let them lie : the Lord hath visited them.
They are from Saul, and for his sake thus wrought on.
[*Exeunt* SAMUEL and the young PROPHETS.

SCENE III.

*Gibeah. A room in the palace. Enter SAUL and the
COURTIER.*

SAUL.

You fell to prophesying? then take others.

COURTIER.

Your Majesty, we lay upon the ground
A long hour senseless.

SAUL.

Take ten chosen men,

Or twenty if thou wilt, that fear no mortal
(For there are such); choose such as do respect
Nor God nor prophets; twenty take of such,
And haste thee bring here David. *[Exit COURTIER.]*

I will send —

If these should fall like to the former ones —
Unto that treason-hatching den of Naioth,
Till all my army lie entranced around
Its circling woods, as thick as soon the leaves
Will lie around them, spread by biting gales. *[Exit]*

MALZAH (*entering*).

Again to Naioth I crawl,
To teach a score of knaves to drawl!
But whether holy psalm it be,
Or a chant of irony,
Hangs on chance or change of wind,
Or humor of Jehovah's mind.
I hear the crew!
I must pursue; —
Ah, something tragic yet I'll do. *[Exit.]*

SCENE IV.

*The same. Time, the following day. Enter SAUL and the
COURTIER.*

SAUL.

Sayest thou these latter also prophesied,
And sunk even as the others to the ground,
After brief rhapsody?

COURTIER.

I do, O King.

Though of them and affected like unto them,
I saw them with these eyes, and with these ears
Heard their hard breathings and their broken mutter-
ings.

Except those heavy and uneasy signs,
A day and night we lay there as if dead ;
Cold midst the fervor of the noontide sun,
And 'neath the pinching of the freezing moon
No colder, but a frost like that of death
Suffering while yet we lived.

SAUL.

Did you not long

To die, and be at rest ? — But you yet live :
Go back and lead on fifty. Pick thy men
Of various spirit ; so that naught there be
Of sympathy between their fears or wills,
Whereby they feel as one though they be many.
Now hasten with thy mongrel-band away,
And better luck than with the former stay.

[Exit COURTIER.]

This is the very workmanship of fear.

They carry thither a bugbear in their souls,
And fall, at length, before it. Yet how know I
But that some evil spirit may be busy
With them as still with me? I'll strive to sleep:—
Strive, did I say? There was a time when Sleep
Was wont to approach me with her soundless feet,
And take me by surprise. I called her not,
And yet she'd come; but now I even woo her,
And court her by the cunning use of drugs,
But still she will not turn to me her steps;
Not even to draw nigh, and, looking down,
Drop on these temples one oblivious tear.
I that am called a king, whose word is law, —
Awake I lie and toss, while the poor slave,
Whom I have taken prisoner in my wars,
Sleeps soundly; and he who hath sold himself to
service,
Although his cabin rock beneath the gale,
Hears not the uproar of the night, but, smiling,
Dreams of the year of jubilee. I would that I
Could sleep at night; for then I should not hear
Ahinoam, poor grieved one, sighing near. [Exit.

SCENE V.

The same.

MALZAH (*entering and crossing the room*).

Now, here's the King in a pretty rage,
And something rich I do presage;
For his fifty fools I felled like trees,
Fools of various degrees.
Fifty fools with fifty fears,

May they lie there fifty years,
Night and day in groans and tears.

SAUL (*entering*).

These last too have succumbed ! Three several bands !
What can be in the world, that the tough sinews
Of stubborn men should slacken, till their owners
Sink to the earth, and, grovelling, lie thereon,
Like trees, that, rotten at the core, have fallen,
Even in the prime and stiffness of their years,
To slander the whole forest ? Why stay here ?
I'll face this mystic influence myself,
And dare it to o'erthrow me.

MALZAH.

Well, I'll be there, although thou shalt not know me.
[Exeunt severally.]

SCENE VI.

*The border of the grove at Naioth. SAMUEL and the Sons of the
PROPHETS. Enter SAUL, followed by some ATTENDANTS.*

SAUL.

Vile man, once more see Saul amongst the prophets !
Am I, like others, come to be demented ?
Come hither, Samuel. Now, by my sword,
Which I throw from me, and which thou mayst take
Up, and on me, on Saul, play Agag with it,
What wouldst thou do ? Down thou too, shield. Ay,
bellow ; —

I dash down thee. Off, helmet, off ! Ay, crack
And roll away, and take the King's head in thee.

Now in the air I stand uncovered, doffed
Before thee and thy disappointed Levites ! —
What, am I not yet naked ? yet more skins ?
Off, off, ye comfortable robes ! off, off !
Why should I lie 'neath you and have your shelter,
When all the flowers o' the forest can lie bare ?
Rust there, my armor, ye my garments, rot ;
For Saul himself is, yet himself is not.

(Sinks on the ground senseless.)

SAMUEL.

Now take him up, and watch him till he wake.
He suffers this for his rebellion's sake.

*[Exeunt the ATTENDANTS, carrying SAUL, and the
PROPHETS softly chanting a solemn strain ; then
MALZAH enters and crosses the scene.]*

MALZAH.

'T was featly done !
And more adroit than I is none. —
Ha, ha ! ha, ha ! let them begone.





ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Gibeah. An apartment in the house of JONATHAN. Time, dusk. Enter JONATHAN and DAVID.

DAVID.

What have I done, what fault have I committed,
Wherein have I offended 'gainst thy father,
That he doth thus persist against my life?

JONATHAN.

No, not in peril is thy life, dear friend.
I know my father will do nothing, David,
Or great or small, without my knowledge; hence
I know he would reveal to me this purpose,
Did he conceive it.

DAVID.

O fair, filial faith,
That in old harmony with nature dwells,
Slow to suspect where should be fullest trust!
But, Jonathan, give credit to my words:
As I now swear to thee that it is true,
So hath thy father sworn to take my life;
But being aware that I have thy good-will,

He hath not told thee, knowing how 't would grieve thee ;
Yet, certainly as the Almighty liveth,
And as thyself dost living stand before me,
There is but one poor step 'twixt me and death.

JONATHAN.

O David, thine 's a hard, unhappy case,
Exposed unto the jealousy of a madman,
Who, 'twixt the demon and the changing moon,
Veers like a creaking vane from side to side.
Still, brother, though he 'hrice hath sought thy life,
I deem not that 't is now imperilled : yet
Tell me how I can help thee, for whatever
Thou 'dst have me now to do for thee I will.

DAVID.

Then hear me, and perform for me this favor.
To-morrow 't is new moon, and I should eat
At table with the King ; but let me go,
And in the envirous conceal myself,
Until the third day's evening. If the King
Miss me, then to him say, " David most earnestly
Sought leave of me to hie to Beth-lehem,
Where now is due an annual sacrifice
For all his family." If he reply,
" 'T is well," then am I safe ; but if he 's angry,
Thou shalt be sure he means to do me evil.
But, Jonathan, act thou with candor towards me,
For sake of that high compact which we made
At Ephes-dammim : still, dear kinsman, still,
If in thy judgment I deserve to die,
Slay me thyself ; betray me not to Saul.

JONATHAN.

And am I then so black? Ah, thought unkind!
Dost thou, then, think that I could prove so faithless?
No, far from me be that. O David, David,
Was I not first to warn thee heretofore?
And if I knew for certain that my father
Now meant thee malice, should I hide it from thee?

DAVID.

Forgive me, Jonathan, what I have uttered
In the distraction of my spirit's sorrow:—
But who shall tell me if it be not so?
And what if Saul should yield a rough response?

JONATHAN.

Listen. When I to-morrow, or 'tween then
And the third day when thou shouldst be our guest,
Shall have my father sounded touching thee,
If I should find he means towards thee no ill,
Yet tell thee not, may God in kind requite me;
But if I find that still he bears thee malice,
I'll send thee safely hence, — and may the Lord
Be with thee as He once was with my father.
But let us go abroad unto the field,
That like ourselves seems sad. The sky grows grayer:
It wears such face as do our fortunes drear;
Old grows the day, and aged is the year. [Exeunt.

SCENE II.

The armory in the palace. Time, immediately succeeding that of the last scene. Enter SAUL in haste, seeking to escape from MALZAH, who enters close behind him.

MALZAH.

Here's a dead calm and blank now in our being.
I will have entertainment ; sing or wail !
Give voice now, else I'll rack thee to a pitch,
And screw thy nerves and tendons to a height
Beyond all human gamut save thine own ;
Then fret and play upon thee till thou sweatest,
And screamest hatefuller than the peacock doth,
And uglier grow'st before my cruel eyes
Than is the gray rat or the pimpled toad.
Sing, or I straight will enter thee perforce,
And squeal myself, not solely through thy mouth,
But also through thy nostrils, eyes, and ears ;
Yea, rant and bellow out at every pore.

SAUL.

Now, desperation, aid me ! Monster, hence !
Or, for that thin and incorporeal form,
Be solid man, and so, grown vulnerable,
Forth challenge me to the wood ; or, in this paved,
Resounding hall, come on with arms and armor,
And he who fails shall be the other's slave.

MALZAH (*going*).

Ho, ho ! ho, ho ! was ever such a Saul !

SAUL.

Stay, stay, I bid thee ; let this commerce end.
Tarry, bad Apparition ; linger. — Pshaw !

It will not be entreated ; but, departing,
Even whilst I cry to it, at the gate out glimmers,
Like to a star that fades away at daylight. —
Ah, it yet looms, — 't is gone.
How long shall this strange creature persecute me !
Perhaps I 'm a sinner in some other sort
Than yet I have suspected ; — here again !

(*Re-enter MALZAH.*)

Where didst thou borrow, fool, that roguish smile ?
Out, grinning Goblin ! follow me no further !

MALZAH.

Retreat not from me, for I will caress thee.

SAUL.

Avaunt !

MALZAH.

I am a solitary wretch ; —
And didst thou not recall me ?

SAUL.

Monster, hence !

Begone, Infernal Shadow, to Gehenna,
Or take thy winging way beyond the desert,
Or sink into the centre of the earth,
If thou have any right to inhabit longer
A world that 's walked by man.

MALZAH.

Ha, ha ! ha, ha ! ha, ha !

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE III.

The apartment in the house of JONATHAN. Time, immediately succeeding that of the last scene.

JONATHAN.

Come in, for the chill zephyrs fan me sadder.
Come in ; and do not doubt my faithfulness,
Although I be thine enemy's son. Be cheered,
For thou in turn must now cheer me. David,
I could now prophesy, but let me not
Anticipate a melancholy doom. —
Answer me not, but now let me bemoan me ;
Grant me the privilege of sorrow ; I
Feel that the fortune of our house is cast,
And that I never can be king in Israel.
And as I know not whether I again
Shall view thee, but in this dim instant see
Distinct the vision of thy future greatness,
Not during my day only shalt thou show
Forbearance, and my life consider sacred,
But thy regard shall cease not towards my kin
When I lie rotting in the sepulchre,
And when in Israel thou hast no foe
Unconquered, uncut off. Swear that unto me.

DAVID.

I swear it, Jonathan. But why ?

JONATHAN.

O, ask not.

Dread hath this moment hold upon me, David,
And horror rounds me like a dismal night,

Till I am even timorous as a child.
Yea, for my children am I timorous ;
'T is for my offspring that I now feel dread :
For thou at length, like all, must be no more ;
And then thy children will be found with mine,
Saul's hate remembered but my love forgotten.
Hence blame me not for sore anxiety ;
But swear, in the strange name of the unborn,
Hereditary friendship ; swear again :
Not for mine own sake, but for my dear children's,
I'd bind thee to me doubly in oaths' bonds.

DAVID.

Ah, why exact now oaths like these from me,
As if I were a formidable thing ?
I who, erelong, in likelihood shall be
An exile ; and this very moment stand,
Beneath thy friendly roof, in jeopardy,
Knowing not but fatal hands shall shortly grasp me.

JONATHAN.

Swear to me notwithstanding.

DAVID.

Yea, I do ;
And now i' the name of my posterity,
Whom God requite if they shall injure thine.

JONATHAN.

My sorrow's tumult now is half allayed,
And its red tide beneath this moon goes down ;
For thou art like the moon, and thy young horns
Are filling fast, even in this very hour,
When thou believest that my father seeks
To drain thy beam and break thy shining crescent,

E'er it shall grow into the perfect orb,
That shall illume this night of Israel, —
This night of the Lord's frown upon our house.
From thee shall come our country's proper dawning ;
For Saul has only been a meteor
That crossed the welkin ere the break of day,
And then went out forever. Lo ! I see
Into the future now : lo, now I see
Into the future through no bank of mist,
But through a clear and frost-purged atmosphere :
I see, and could unto thee prophesy,
Telling thee things of night and blackest doom :
How in the morning God's hand founded us,
But ere 't was noon my father set on fire
The rising edifice that, ere 't is finished,
Topples to ruin, and shall soon be buried.
But wherefore longer chant a doleful truth ?
To-morrow is new moon, and thou 'lt be missed.
When 't is thy duty with the King to dine.
Three days conceal thyself ; then straight come down
And take thy station by the rock of Ezel ;
And I will come and shoot three arrows near it, —
As though I shot them at a mark, — and send
A boy on purpose to recover them.
And now remember what I say to thee.
If I expressly say unto the lad,
"The arrows are on this side ; quickly bring them,"
Then come thou : there is peace for thee, not danger.
But if I speak unto him thus : "Boy, see,
The arrows are beyond thee," prompt depart,
For 't is the Lord that bids thee. And as touching
The other matter whereof I have spoken,
Be He between us a continual witness.
And now farewell awhile.

DAVID.

Farewell awhile.

[Exit JONATHAN.]

Did e'er despair and resignation sit
Before on one so worthy? His farewell
How sad and solemn! Tears, flow for Jonathan.
He seems as gifted with divining sorrow,
And to have more fear than hope even for the morrow.
O, morrow, come; elapse, three pregnant days.
Lord, come what will, thy servant thee obeys. [Exit.]

SCENE IV.

A dining-hall in the palace. Time, second day of the moon.

SAUL, JONATHAN, ABNER, PUBLIC OFFICERS, and
COURTIERS, dining.

JONATHAN (*aside*).

This is the second day o' the moon, and he
Hath no inquiry made, as yet, for David.
Still must I not infer too much from that:
Silence hath oft most meaning; and deep malice
Brawls not, no more than does the deep, slow current,
That, imperceptible, attracts the vessel
Unto the gulping whirlpool: yet I wish
That some inquiry he would make of me
Concerning David's absence, so that I
Might better know his thoughts toward my dear friend.

SAUL (*gruffly*).

Why comes not Jesse's son to eat with us,
Nor yesterday nor yet again to-day?

JONATHAN.

My liege, forgive me, but most pressingly
He sought my leave to go to Beth-lehem,
Where there is yearly made a sacrifice
For all his family. So earnestly
He begged of me, that I permitted him
To let his seat be vacant this new moon.

SAUL.

And by what right hast thou dared give him furlough?
His place is here, and not at Beth-lehem, —
To eat with me, and not to sacrifice.
By hell, I'll sacrifice him now! Speak not : —
I will allow no answer. Knave,
Thou canst no more deceive me. Knave! — n fool!
A hundred times a fool. Thou froward fool,
Thou son of the perverse, rebellious woman,
Do I not know thou hast chosen Jesse's son
To thy disgrace and unto her dishonor?
Thou fool begotten of a wicked woman,
Have I not told thee, heretofore, that neither
Thy person nor thy power can be in safety
So long as Jesse's son still walks the earth?
Instantly send and fetch him ; — send and fetch him,
For now I am resolved that he shall die.

JONATHAN.

Now, by the Great Eternal that 's in heaven,
I bear these taunts no longer! Asperse, Sire, me,
But not my mother, neither my dear friend
David, my brother, and thy too-good son.
O father, shame! how hast thou done him shame,
Even in his absence and before these Peers!
Go fetch him! Shall I be commanded, like

A butcher's boy to fetch a calf or sheep,
That his bloat master may it stick and flay?
Shall I hale David to you to be slaughtered?
What hath he done? Say wherefore he should die.

(SAUL casts a javelin at JONATHAN, who leaves the hall in great anger, and convinced that his father is determined on DAVID's death.)

AN OFFICER.

My liege, —

ABNER.

Cousin, what would you do?

SAUL.

What do?

Kill both the traitor and yon traitorous son:
I will pursue him to the ends o' the earth!

(The company all rise in confusion and leave the hall.)

Yet I repent me that I threw that dart;
And fear that I am growing weak and wild,
To have in fury thus assailed my child.
Alas, alas, that we should be the toys
Of ruddy passion and of pale surprise!
The guests are gone, I may as well go too,
For staying here were but to stay and rue,
Both that I should have such a vexing son,
And vexed, unseemly deed now towards him done.

[Exit, and enter MALZAH at the other side.

MALZAH.

I've had no part in this. I'm sorry, too,
(Like thee, O King), that ever I came to thee.
Zounds! why, I ought to have strong penance set me,
Or else be branded with some sign of shame,
For having volunteered for his undoing. —

There 's no essential honor nor good i' the world ;
But a pure selfishness is all in all. —
Nay, I could curse my demonhood, and wish
Myself to be thrice lost for that behavior. —
But I believe I am a very mean-souled spirit. [Exit.

SCENE V.

Near the rock Esel. Enter JONATHAN and a lad.

JONATHAN.

Run now, and find the arrows I shall shoot.

(As the lad goes forward, JONATHAN shoots an arrow past him.)

The arrow is beyond thee : quick, stay not.

(The lad, having found the arrow, returns with it to JONATHAN.)

I find I am not in the vein this morning :
Return with my artillery to the city.

(The lad departs, and DAVID comes from concealment, and, with signs of great respect and emotion, approaches JONATHAN, who embraces him, and they weep upon each other's neck in silence, DAVID most passionately.)

JONATHAN.

How long shall these dull-spelling tears postpone
The syllables I must at length pronounce ?
David, my father hates thee.

DAVID.

Without cause :

'T is that makes this so bitter. — Crack, heart, crack ;
Spill all this dreadful agony at once.

JONATHAN.

O, cease, dear friend, these bosom-rifting sighs,
These horrible convulsions that so shake thee :
I cannot loose, yet cannot bear to feel thee
Thus like a woman sob and agonize.

DAVID.

O for a woman's shriek, to cut the cord
That binds my woe down on my swelling heart
Until I suffocate! Still, let me weep ;
O, I could pour out all my soul in tears,
Till we both stood in a hot pool of grief!
Jonathan, methinks, methinks my heart will break.

JONATHAN.

Check this salt inundation, and each speak,
As man to man, his sorrow.

DAVID.

So I would,

But tears relieve me.

JONATHAN.

Weep, then, if thou wilt.

Yet longer ; weep, for sorrow hath its bounds,
As hath the ocean, that, howe'er it rain,
Rises no higher : sorrow is as water,
That, boiling, grows no hotter, yet still seeks
From the tormented bottom to ascend,
And lose itself in vapor.

DAVID.

Ah, could I

But lose in tears this torture! Jonathan,
As water flees from fire, gush forth my tears,
Out of my heart fierce burning. I have heard

It said that somewhere there are boiling springs,
Heated by secret fires within the earth ;
So at my eyes gush forth these scalding tears,
Boiled by the bosomed furnace of my anguish.
I have been told of hollow mountains too,
Belching out flames that thaw their summit snows ;
I am a mountain whose head Saul hath lifted,
By unsought benefits, and, as with snow,
O'erspread with flakes of unenduring honors.
Chide, if thou wilt ; say aught that may congeal me :
For I am snow, and this event is fire ;—
I thaw beneath Saul's hot, unnatural rage.

JONATHAN.

Against its zenith-blaze and noonday fierceness,
We must be obdurate as unsunned ice ;
And a cold, March-like blast of speech, and frown
Worse than November's on the brow, must cow him.
Kindness but irritates him, and thy wrongs
Too great already are to be forgotten.

DAVID.

O, could I find out some sweet dissolution,
Some friendly, cheating, false oblivion,
Would cause me to forget what he hath done !
O, would the King himself forget his errors,
And be unto me as in days long past ;
Or that it had not been my lot to know him !

JONATHAN.

It is too late : and I have chidden him,
More than becomes me towards a madman father.
He's mad, he's mad, cast off of Heaven ; and now
Doth, in his hell-inspired fatuity,

Cast from him thee, his last, his only angel.
But let us dry these unavailing tears,
And, with such truce to sorrow as we may,
Wend each from each his sad and several road.
Now go in peace ; remembering that the Lord
Is always witness to the covenant
That late we made beneath mine own roof-tree,
Both for ourselves and our posterity.
Farewell.

DAVID.

Farewell ; perhaps farewell forever.

[Exit, still weeping.]

JONATHAN.

He is o'erwhelmed by bodeful clouds of gloom.
And now this world seems unto me a tomb.
Methinks 't were better I should with him flee ;
Nor court nor city can again charm me. *[Exit.]*

SCENE VI.

*Nob. Interior of a small sanctuary with an altar at one end.
A lamp burning. Time, night. Present AHIMELECH, an
aged priest, and DOEG, an Edomite and principal herdsman
of SAUL ; the former officiating at the altar, the latter reclin-
ing at a distance. A knocking heard.*

AHIMELECH.

Who's knocking there so softly ?

(Takes the lamp and opens the door.)

Who art thou ?

(DAVID enters.)

David ?

DAVID.

The same. Speak low.

AHIMELECH.

What brings thee here
At this strange hour, my son, and unattended ?

DAVID.

The King hath charged me with a special business,
And I have left my followers o'er the hill.
Say, what provision hast thou ? Give me five loaves,
Or aught else thou hast ready.

AHIMELECH.

Hallowed bread
Is all I have at present ; but if thou -
And all thy servants have, at least, abstained
From women, thou mayest have it.

DAVID.

For three days
(The time since first we started) certainly
Women have been kept from us ; and our vessels
Are holy ; and the bread, too, in a manner,
Is common, e'en supposing that it had
This day lain sanctified within the vessels.

AHIMELECH (*having fetched the bread from the altar*),
Here, take this from the altar : and if I
In thus providing for thy need do wrong,
Let not the error fall upon my soul ;
For 't is to assist thee in the King's command,
That to the action prompts my doubtful hand.

DOEG (*aside*).

'T is well that I am here to have beheld this.
He is a fugitive, and, when I home
(Which I shall towards so soon as liberated)
Am come, I'll turn this scene to my account :

For tidings brought of him will please the King ;
And I abhor these Israelitish priests,
Though with my offerings I am here to feed them.

DAVID.

Hast thou nor sword nor any other weapon ?
For there are vagabonds about these parts ;
And I have come unarmed, so suddenly
Was I despatched.

AHIMELECH.

There is Goliath's sword,
Wrapped in a cloth and placed behind the ephod.
But 't were a load for thee to bear it : yet
If thou wilt take it, I will give it thee : —
Indeed it unto thee belongs : — moreover,
Here is no other.

DAVID.

Father, give it me :
There is none like it, and its dreadful guise
Will daunt all danger till it do withdraw
And leave my way unthreatened.

AHIMELECH.

Here it is.

I shudder while I bear it unto thee.
How black it is, yet bright ! It seems
As if it were the scymitar of Death ;
So cold, so cruel, and withal so huge,
That it might freeze with fear all human hearts,
Each human hand, so well it could create
A whirlwind in the wielding.

DAVID.

'T is a blade

Fit for the hand of a destroying angel,

Or arm of demon going forth by night
On deeds of devastation. Give it me :
With this provided, I will hurry on ;
And of this visit see thou tell to none. [Exit DAVID.

DOEG (*aside*).

I will feign sleep ; and the old, stupid priest
Make think I have not seen this.

AHIMELECH.

Sir, awake :

The night apace is wearing. I knew not
You slept.

DOEG.

Nor I ; — but sleep 's a treacherous thing,
And steals upon us. I am somewhat chilly. —
Beshrew me, but I could have sworn most roundly —
But for your word — I 'd not been sleeping soundly.

AHIMELECH (*aside*).

Perhaps 't is well he has not seen our motions.
(To DOEG.) Son, it was wrong to sleep at your devo-
tions.

DOEG.

Forgive me. — But how goes the hour ? All 's silent.

AHIMELECH.

We 've climbed almost unto the ridge of night.
'T is very dark, for not a star is out ;
And, I believe, 't is raining. God help all
Who are unhoused now, for it blows a squall.

Listen! Now come within and take thy rest:
I have performed the rites thou didst request.

DOEG.

Father, lead on. (*Aside.*) Now evil me befall,
If round thy head I do not raise a squall. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VII.

The environs of Nob. Time, immediately following that of the last scene: dark and stormy.

DAVID.

Whither should I proceed? In my own country
There is no safety for me; for the foot
Of Saul will follow me where'er I go.
A foreign land must shelter me; yet which?
For Israel's neighbors are but neighboring foes.
Egypt and Edom hate us, Ammon and Moab:
And proud Philistia hath too rudely felt
Of late our ire; and who as much as I
To them obnoxious? Yet I'll thither go:
The brave are generous, and the treachery
Of all besides around deters my seeking
To cross their borders. Lord, direct my path.—
I'll shelter seek of Achish, King of Gath.

SCENE VIII.

The royal court at Gath. ACHISH, LORDS, CAPTAINS, ATTENDANTS, &c., and DAVID.

DAVID.

Behold me, King, a Hebrew fugitive,
Who comes to thee for shelter from oppression.
Graciously let me, with my services,
Buy thy protection and the right to live
Molestless 'neath thy sway.

ACHISH.

Thou 'rt safe awhile,

Whoe'er thou art, or whatsoever wind
Of fault or fortune may have blown thee hither.

A CAPTAIN (*to another, and in an undertone, but overheard by DAVID*).

Is not this David, worshipped by his countrymen?
Whose king, 't is said, he shall be; and of whom
The Hebrew maidens chanted in these words:
"Saul hath his thousands slain, but David tens
Of thousands," over our defeat rejoicing
In their hilarious dances?

SECOND CAPTAIN.

So I deem it.

DAVID (*aside*).

O, it is hard to hide the shining truth!
'T is as the sun's ray fighting through the clouds
Its way to men: yet guile must serve me now;
For I discover that they do suspect

Who 't is I am. How must I cheat them ? I
Will straight feign madness.

(DAVID begins to let his spittle fall upon his beard, and
scrabbles on the door-post. The FIRST CAPTAIN whispers
to ACHISH.)

ACHISH.

'T is David, sayest thou ? 't is a madman. See,
The man is mad : why did they let him enter ?
Think you we 've need of madmen ? take him hence,
And see that he no more intrude upon us.

FIRST CAPTAIN.

Great Gath, forgive us, but, most certainly,
No man than he was saner even now.
He overheard us, doubtless ; and now merely
Assumes this changed and rabid-like demeanor.

SECOND CAPTAIN.

He hath discovered our suspicion, sire ;
His madness is as opportune as sudden.

ACHISH.

You err : — see how he paws the door-posts. Tush !
Hath not, then, Achish learned as yet to know
Accomplished captain from a drivelling idiot ?
Take him away ; but let him freely wander.
The man seems harmless, give unto him food : —
'T were a fine fellow only for this mood.

[*Exeunt all except the TWO CAPTAINS and DAVID.*]

FIRST CAPTAIN.

The King will learn his error when too late.
David is here, a spy upon our state.

[*Exeunt the CAPTAINS.*]

DAVID.

Where should I fly to next? I am as one
'Twixt fire and water, either fatal to him.
Yet some place must I seek wherein to shelter.
I've heard there is a cave, Adullam called,
Which lies not far from here. I'll strive to find it;
For I in safety cannot house with men:
And better perish by the bestial brood,
Than hand of him who seeks to spill my blood.
'T is in a barren wild, yet God can there
Preserve me still, and hearken to my prayer. [Exit.

SCENE IX.

Interior of JESSE's house. JESSE and DAVID's mother; the latter weeping.

MOTHER.

Alas, alas, my son!

JESSE.

Yes, weep thy fill.

We are no more in safety than himself;
For the capricious tyrant, any hour,
May clutch us up as hostages, or even,
In his blind thirst for our best offspring's blood,
Spill ours: then let us, with our house, repair
Unto the cavern of Adullam; there
Let us together live.

MOTHER.

Yea, let us hence,
And, if it must be, there together die.

JESSE.

Thou sayest well ; arise : we will at once,
With all our household, to our brave son hie.

[*Exeunt*]

SCENE X.

Near the cave of Adullam.

DAVID.

I draw men unto me, as amber straws.
They that are in distress, youths hopelessly
In the entanglements of love, and they whom debt
Had gripped, and was fast holding to deliver
Over in bondage to the creditor ;
And some whom Saul has much offended ; also
Many who 've come to me for very love's sake,
Preferring stint and danger, found with me,
To full, but doubtful, safety with the King.
Thus malecontents of all kinds daily join me :
Four hundred, when I counted last, they told.
But from amongst them two must be removed, —
Two bending stalks must be by me transplanted.
It is not fit my parents should abide
With me, and take the chances of the chase ;
Still stretch their failing limbs beneath the dripping
O' the ever-weeping cavern : no, though they
Complain not, I will lead them to a place
Of safety. Ruth, mine own great-grandame, was
From Moab ; I will go unto its king,
And beg him to permit them hence to fly,
And live with him till Saul or they shall die. [Exit.

SCENE XI.

Ramah, not far from Gibeah. SAUL seated beneath the shade of a tree, and with a spear in his hand; DOEG, courtiers, soldiers, and servants (chiefly Benjamites), disposed around him.

A COURTIER.

My liege, I've news meet for the royal ear.
From Naioth David did escape to Gath;
But it being there suspected who he was,
Thence fled he to the cavern of Adullam;
And from all quarters to himself drew men; —
Wretches distressed in mind or circumstance,
Lost bankrupts, thriftless ones, unthriving souls;
Adventurers of all kinds, robbers, cheats,
And discontented spirits of the state; —
All these, and other such, to him repaired;
But, at the instance of the prophet Gad,
He left the cave, and lurks in Hareth's wood.

SAUL.

Ye've long known this. (*Aside.*) Bear it, my sore-strained heart.

Yet hard to bear, as is the unfaithfulness
And disobedience of false wife and children,
Is this defection and foul lack of duty.
Of Judah and of Levi, I could well
Have this expected; but of Benjamin,
How could we? (*Aloud.*) Ye unfaithful Benjamites,
Think ye that Jesse's son will give you all
Vineyards and farms, and make you every one
Captains, and dub you all of high degree,

That ye have every one conspired against me,
 And none inform me that mine eldest son
 Is in collusion with the son of Jesse?
 Yet so it is, and with your knowledge, still
 Not one among you is at all concerned,—
 Not one among you all is sorry for me;
 Nor tells me that my son hath stimulated
 A subject thus against me to rebel.

(*Aside*). None answer me, none answer;—treason,
 treason

So fills the air that all have grown infected.
 O treachery, O treason, hollowness;—
 I'm sick, I'm sick to death with hollowness;
 I'm pierced all over by these ingrates' arrows.
 How many of these men have I made great!
 Yet of them all on this not one breaks silence.
 I am alone, I am alone midst numbers.
 I'm a lone house amidst a populous city
 Whose tenants are abroad, where thieves have entered,
 And there is none about to cry out "Robber!"
 I am deserted; all do now desert me;
 And, in the middle of this grove of men,
 I'm bare and barren, waste and bitter hungry;
 Yea, hungry, and not one will help to feed me,—
 Will help to feed my gnawing, just revenge.
 (*Aloud*.) Are you all silent yet? Will none inform me
 Of all he knows of David's evil-doings?

DOEG (*aside*).

Now is my moment, and I'll make the best on't!
 (*Aloud*.) My liege, forgive me, for I now remember,—
 Though I thought nothing of it at the time;—
 Pardon me, King, but, being there myself,
 Detained before the Lord in holy rites,

I saw the son of Jesse come to Nob,
To Ahimelech, who sought for him the Lord,
And gave him victuals and Goliath's sword.

SAUL.

Ah, worse than Naioth this ! Go fetch
Ahimelech, and all related to him ;
Bring every priest that you shall find in Nob.
Take men, and seize the traitors ; swift, away.
If they be guilty, they shall dearly pay.

[Exeunt all save the King.]

At last I 'm getting on a beaten track
O'er which to move in certainty, in place
Of floundering in quagmires of suspicion ;
Or, half bewildered 'twixt my rage and fear,
Deviously wandering in dim surmise.
I 'm dawning now ; and still, amidst my night,
This danger, like a lurid pole-star, pointed
Ever toward the priestly north. — Out, out ! All night
My soul hath watched them like a pacing sentry ;
My spirit viewed them like a couchant mastiff,
Winking with eyes directed on the robber,
And now shall spring upon them. — Gad, in Hareth !
The priests are at the bottom of it all ;
But heavily shall vengeance on them fall. *[Exit.]*

SCENE XII.

The same. Enter TWO SOLDIERS, meeting.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Woe, woe ! — Now will a curse light on him ! Woe !
Ahimelech and all the priests of Nob
Are, by the orders of the King, just slain.

SECOND SOLDIER.

Take back thy words, thou impious jester! Slain?

FIRST SOLDIER.

Slain; — nay, believe it, for heaven's thunder soon
Will peal it o'er the world.

SECOND SOLDIER.

O, fearful news!

But who in Israel were found so vile? —
Who did the deed?

FIRST SOLDIER.

None, none of Israel, —

All ours refused; but that damned Edomite,
Doeg, who for our priests no reverence knows,
Fell on them with a double-handed sword,
Like a strong thresher on a heap of corn,
And cut them up in pieces. Here he comes.
O the blood-streaked and impious human tiger!
The sacrilegious demon! — Let's not stay.
His hands are reeking; — yea, his breath is bloody.
See, with a ruddy lustre yet his eyeballs glare.
Surely from hell hath been cast up that monster!

[Exeunt, and enter DOEG with a huge sword.]

DOEG.

Fourscore and five of the perpetrators
Of hate against my nation have I silenced:
But am not yet contented; for my rage
Rose, as a tempest might, at its own sound;
Rose as I wreaked it, and I thirstier grew,
As, with the broad lips of this heavy blade,
I tasted of each sacerdotal beaker.

But I have shed and shattered them all now ; —
And 't is the King's work, who, with his own hands,
Might have killed me had not I straight obeyed him.

(Enter SAUL.)

SAUL.

Thou art the noblest butcher in the land.
Now go to Nob ; first having gathered men
Who, like thyself, having heard the royal hest,
Incontinently do it. Wash thyself ;
For so transformed by thine ensanguined favors,
Thou 'dst raise but few recruits. Begone, raze Nob
Unto the ground ; and every living thing,
Human or bestial, do thou cause to perish.
Let none escape old memories to cherish. [Exit.

DOEG.

I cherish, in my memory, Edom's wrongs,
And crowd of quiet scorns, that I endure
For sake of being chief herdsman to the King :
So, King, the first of vintners, I will tread
This wine-press for thee ; first, though, these grim
 stains
Deterge, that come from Edom-hater's veins.
Having tasted of the cup, I 'd broach the tun,
And with my fellows drink till it be done ;
Then, rubicund, return, and thee before
Stand proudly heady, and incrust with gore. [Exit.

SCENE XIII.

The forest of Hareth.

DAVID.

Who hither comes with such dishevelled hair
And garments torn ? Despair and woe appear
To urge him toward me, e'en as if he meant
To cast his sorrows' weight down at my feet.
I know him now : Abiathar, the son
Of good Ahimelech, the priest who lately
Did, at his peril, give me friendly succor.
Some evil hath befallen Ahimelech !

(Enter ABIATHAR, the son of Ahimelech.)

Welcome, my benefactor's son. How fares
Thy father ?

ABIATHAR.

Well.

DAVID.

Thy kindred ?

ABIATHAR.

Well.

DAVID.

And Nob ?

ABIATHAR.

No more ; for, with a ruthless butchery,
Saul hath it visited with such horrid war
Of fiends in human shape, that I alone
Live to remember its past days of peace.

DAVID.

Now help me, God, to disbelieve thy servant !

ABIATHAR.

Believe my story for its very truth's sake ;
 Revenge it for mine own, my sire's, and God's.

DAVID.

O horrible ! — And did your sacred order
 Avail you naught ? Whence did he gather monsters
 That dared to do this sacrilegious deed ?

ABIATHAR.

Doeg, that treacherous and heathen hound, —
 Doeg, O David, Doeg, he whom thou
 Didst see at thy brief calling, led them on.
 They did surround us, and, with uncouth yells,
 Fell on us, sparing none.

DAVID.

All murdered ?

ABIATHAR.

All.

DAVID.

The priests, too, slain ?

ABIATHAR.

They first.

DAVID.

Hush, heart ; —

But I must speak or burst. And yet, alas !
 Alas, what phrase would fit this hideous theme !
 O let me weep, weep ! heart, break to shivers !
 Yet must I speak, yet must I groan a curse
 On Doeg and his crew. May they all perish !
 May they go down alive to hell forever !
 Why wert thou slack then, hell, nor didst engulf them ?

And why was Heaven slack too? — Peace, lips, O
peace ;

For ye too are grown impious. But did Heaven
Behold these monsters and not rain down fire,
As erst it did on Sodom and Gomorrah ?
Shall there not be another dark Dead Sea
Where'er they shall be buried ? The sacred Nob, —
God's holy priests, — thine unoffending father,
Good, charitable man, — nay, now shall mortals
Shoot at the stars, and seek to mar the mansion
Where angels do inhabit. O, what will
This raging king do next ? He will o'erthrow
All altars ; snatch therefrom the sacrifices. —
E'en that were little after this great horror.

ABIATHAR.

Bate not as yet your words : pour out the torrent.

DAVID.

O, 't was his demon, 't was his demon working ;
It was his demon in the form of Doeg ! —
All perished, saidst thou ?

ABIATHAR.

All.

DAVID.

Age was no shield ?

ABIATHAR.

No more than is its ripeness to the corn
Against the sickle.

DAVID.

And the sword devoured

Your children ?

w

ABIATHAR.

On them they rushed, as on young lambs
Rush the remorseless wolves : but it was Saul
Who set them on ; — Saul, Saul destroyed our fold.

DAVID.

O horror ! horror ! — No, it was not Saul !
Hell emptied her of her most barbarous spirits,
And poured them up unto the earth, that they
Thereon might pour out Aaron's sacred blood. —
Inhuman Edomite ! the hell-dog Doeg !
Abiathar, I knew when I beheld him
That night, at Nob, he would inform the King.
I have myself caused this catastrophe.

ABIATHAR.

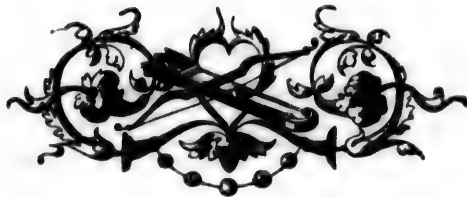
'T is thou who must avenge it.

DAVID.

So I will,
On Doeg and on Edom, to my fill.
Come with me further into this dim wood,
Where I abide with many brave and good.
Never, although poor Nob now razéd be,
Shall 't be erased from my memory.

[Exeunt, going further into the forest.]





ACT V.

SCENE I.

Gibeah. A room in the palace.

SAUL.

Now lively action breaks up stagnant death ;
For, lo, that outlaw David 's in a snare,
Having entered wall-girt Keilah. I shall crush him
Now ; since I will besiege him with a host
That shall stop up each avenue of escape
So thickly, that if he but sally forth
'T will only be to render up his life.

(Enter an OFFICER.)

How now ?

OFFICER.

My liege,
David hath passed from Keilah.

SAUL.

'T is not so !
How came the news ?— Speak ; tell me quickly.

OFFICER.

By one who Keilah left at David's heels ;
And says the town's inhabitants had meant
To have delivered him unto the King.

SAUL.

SAUL.

And which way went the traitor, says he ?

OFFICER.

Toward

The wilderness of Ziph.

SAUL.

Thither will we steer.

Go get thee ready.

[Exit OFFICER.]

Every day shall see

An active search made for our enemy,

Until we take him ; and, he being dead,

Subsides our danger of him and our dread. [Exit.]

SCENE II.

*Border of the wilderness of Ziph. SAUL and his army in
pursuit of DAVID.*

SAUL.

Now, being upon the margin of his haunt,
Put on your vigilance ; outspread yourselves,
And, marching, sweep the region clean before you.

(The army having passed.)

Ye savage and dark-wooded wilds, disclose
The traitor to me : rocks, if ye do hide him
(As it is said you do) behind your doors,
Reveal him : wind, blow towards him, so that I
May follow thee as a vane ; or if thou 'rt from him,
Whisper into mine ear where 't is he lurks ;
Or you, ye penetrating sunbeams, play
For me the spy. [Exit.]

SCENE III.

The skirts of a wood in the wilderness of Ziph. Time, twilight. Enter JONATHAN.

JONATHAN.

How silent all is here ! Here is, at least,
Peace ; and methinks that peace is likest heaven.
Now could I, too, become a fugitive,
Ne'er to review the turmoil of the city,
The court's intrigue, and distuned passion's jar
That frets so this sweet world ; for I am ill
Composed for earth. Methinks the radiant ether
Should be my world ; and all my intercourse
Should be with heroes that resemble David.
Where art thou, David, much-abused brother ?
Thou art not far from me, methinks : — how far, then ?
If thou dost rest, nor like to those shy beasts
That rise at night and seek therein their prey,
Rise now, and, free from day's encumb'ring arms,
Approach to me behind night's shady shield ;
Come catch me in thy grasp, thy prisoner. —
How gain with him but one hour's intercourse ?
I will invade these boughs, and, in the glades
O' the forest standing, woo him with my voice.
He hath not yet forgot the air I'll warble.

(Enters the forest and sings.)

Come to me, love, come to me, love.
Lo, the moon gayly climbs up heaven ;
And stars appear to twinkle clear,
And Hesper, queen o' the seven.

For the gentle, nameless hour is come,
The hour 'tween day and night ;
When feeble Age takes rest at home,
And abroad young Love delight.

DAVID (*rushing in*).

Jonathan, it is thy voice !

JONATHAN.

O David, David,
Thine should I know out of all Israel's.
How hast thou fared since last we said adieu ?

DAVID.

A tale too long to tell, by far too sad : —
Yet not all sad : in this uncouth exile
The Lord is with me, even as he was
Within the polished city.

JONATHAN.

Still thy trust
Put in him, — he 'll not fail thee ; and fear not
My father, who hunts after thee in vain.
I know thou wilt be king of Israel yet,
And that I shall be next to thee in power ;
Which well my father too in secret knows.
But let's not speak of this, for I am glad ;
So truce to thoughts that cannot but be sad.

DAVID.

So be it ; gladness breaks within myself,
Like sudden morning, at your Highness' presence.
Angels of old have visited mankind,
And now your Highness' visit unto me
Seems bright as one from heaven's hierarchy.

JONATHAN.

As the maid longs for tryst, I 've longed for this !
But deeper tempt this thick, involving shade,
Where tangled branches make yet deeper night,
And there, in brief, recount thy late adventures ;
For should this night my jealous father miss me,
It might detain him here : 't is understood
That this will be the last watch on this wood ;
But he is fierce at still returning baffled.

DAVID.

Alas, poor King !

JONATHAN.

Yea, David, pity Saul ;
For as thou risest, 't is his doom to fall :
But let Heaven's will be done, that orders all.

[Exeunt, and, after a while, re-enter

DAVID.

Listen ; I hear the surly sentinels.

JONATHAN.

They all are in my secret : fear them not.
Believe, not one of them would willingly
Disclose thee to the King. Farewell !

DAVID.

Farewell !

[Exeunt sadly, and by different ways.

SCENE IV.

A room in the palace at Gibeah.

SAUL.

We are returned unto our den more fierce
Than rushed we out of it ; we 're coiled again,
After a snake-like spring. But we 'll abide,
And watch with patience, as the spider doth
For the entangling of the distant fly.
As it, 'neath pressing hunger, quiet sits
Within its lonely aperture, until
It sees or feels far off its fated prey,
We will in Gibeah bide to wait for David.
I must remove that fascinating serpent,
Before it shall have grown a mighty dragon,
To wear my crown. But that he is encouraged
By my besotted and unnatural son,
I had him crushed ere now. Beware, beware,
Jonathan, thou mother-counselled weakling, lest
I trample thee to death in killing him.

(Enter an OFFICER.)

What now ? — Are the Philistines coming ?

OFFICER.

No,
My liege : they know too well who 'd meet them. No ;
But up from the wild wilderness of Ziph,
Which we have left so lately, men are come
With tidings for you.

SAUL.

Bid them straight come hither.

[Exit OFFICER.]

Now I'll be slow and cautious, and look deep
Into each villain's eyes ; for how know I
But that they come to cheat me, and to draw,
Out of the sudden treasure of my joy,
Unto themselves some gain. I do believe
That every Ziphite is the rebel's friend.
But I'll detain the knaves, if knaves they be,
As vouchers for the truth of their own tale.

(Enter ZIPHITES.)

They look like honest men ; — and yet but little
Can be inferred from looks. The crafty soul
Can clothe itself according to its pleasure,
And at the oriels of the eyes stand, showing
In guise of saint, when 't is, indeed, a devil.
You are from Ziph ?

FIRST ZIPHITE.

We are, your Majesty.

SAUL.

We were ourselves there lately. You had saved
Yourselves this journey by delivering
Your news at home.

FIRST ZIPHITE.

Your Majesty, when you
Were with us, we had nothing to deliver ;
Except it were (the which, indeed, we did)
To offer you our services, to aid
In finding him you sought for ; but you scarcely
Had left us, when, emboldened by your absence,
He and his followers exposed themselves,
Pale, lean, and hungry, and entreating food.

SAUL.

And did you give it to them ?

FIRST ZIPHITE.

What they would
They from us took ; then straight with it retired
Unto another forest, one that covers
The hill of Hachilah, pierced with secret caves ;
And overtoppling so with loosened rocks,
That they who enter first into the forest,
Might send them lumbering on all later comers.
The hill is south of Jeshmon.

SAUL.

Is it so ?
Sirs, you shall lead me thither : and the head
Of David shall be yours, if you do find him ;
But if you do not, your heads shall be mine.
Is it well ?

SECOND ZIPHITE.

Alas, your Majesty, the eagle
May fly away before we reach his eyrie.
But if you find that he was not on Hachilah
When we left Ziph, take not alone our heads,
But let our innocent babes meet the desert
Of those who 'd dare to trifle with the king.

SAUL.

Ye trifle now, believe me, with your souls,
If you do sport with me in any way ;
Either by foul collusion with my foe,
To draw on me some loss by stratagem,
Or for yourselves an undeserved reward.
Then give to me at once some evidence
That I may know that what you say is true,
And that yourselves are not the emissaries
Of this ill wanderer. Show me the mean snare,

If you have purposed one ; or, once I've found it,
It shall yourselves clasp, and not you alone,
But the whole treacherous wilderness of Ziph.

FIRST ZIPHITE

So be it done, and more, if Heaven's judgments
May second thine. Let the earth open and swallow
All souls up, true with false, if we deceive thee.

SAUL.

Amen. As Dathan and Abiram perished,
And went down live to hell, so may go all
Who shall (through you) tempt me to scale the top
Of heaven-touching, perilous Hachilah.

THIRD ZIPHITE.

More than thine imprecation be upon us,
And upon all our country, if we're false !
But come down quickly, and thy forces hold
Ready to seize him, whilst our part shall be
To lead him unawares into thy power.

SAUL.

God's blessing be upon you, Ziphites ; for
Ye have compassion on me ! Go and spy,
And ascertain his most familiar haunts.
Learn who hath seen him there : for we are told
He is most wary ; therefore be exact.
Find out beforehand all his lurking-places,
And come to me with safest certainty :
Then I'll go with you ; and, if in the land
He be, will capture him, though I should have
To search throughout all Israel.

SAUL.

FIRST ZIPHITE.

We obey,

O King.

SAUL.

Go secretly to work.

SECOND ZIPHITE.

We will.

SAUL.

Yet diligently too ; and your reward
Is sure. Return to me with all prepared.

[*Exeunt ZIPHITES.*]

What were another journey thither ! Far better
A hundred toilsome marches there and back,
Than thus to live misgiving. Were he dead,
There were an end, save in his recollection : —
Ay, there is what restrains me, — yet restrains
Me not ; for I will hunt him to the death,
Though it make sick myself : I'll be assured ;
I will endure much smarting to be cured.

[*Exit*]

SCENE V.

The wilderness of Ziph. The same ZIPHITES as in the preceding scene.

SECOND ZIPHITE.

'T is as I ventured to forewarn the King :
The bird has flown to the bare plain of Jeshmon.

FIRST ZIPHITE.

So much the worse for the bird then : for the King
Is at our heels with twice his former numbers ;
And stealthily he marches without sound

Of clarions blowing, nor has banners cast
Unto the wind ; but, wisely now discarding
Slow military pomp, comes, like a falcon, swooping
Back on the quarry that it lately missed.

SECOND ZIPHITE.

But David hath been warned of his approach,
And is among the crags of Maon gotten.
In Ziph, too, more are for him than against him ;
And some have run before the whispering wind
To warn him of his peril. Bad is brewing :
What we have done others have been undoing.

(Enter SAUL and some military.)

SAUL.

Where is he ?

FIRST ZIPHITE.

Pardon us, your Majesty,
He has just fled from Hachilah ; but the desert,
Which he hath crossed exposed him, even as
The leafless winter the lean moor-fowl shows ;
And nothing save the bare and rugged rocks
Now shelter him, only with treacherous turn
To raise against him the gaunt arm of Famine
Who ever dwells there, and will him compel
At length into your power.

SAUL *(aside)*.

The ostrich hides
Its head, and thinks that all is hid ; so he :
But I will track him to the mountain crag,
Swifter than Ishmael's horsemen o'er the sands
Chase that dull bird. *(Aloud.)* Go ye before me swiftly.
Let no one think of halting all this day.
(Aside.) Methinks I have him now a certain prey.

[Exeunt omnes.]

SCENE VI.

DAVID *and his company on the side of a mountain.*

DAVID.

Hasten, or we shall be surrounded ; lo !
The King is near, with doubled numbers, striving
To hem us in, and to possess the gorge
Ere we can pass it. Let your arms be covered,
Lest that they, telltale, glitter in the sun ;
For we will not uplift them 'gainst our nation,
Nor its anointed king. Let God be judge
'Twixt him and us, and be our Succorer.

[Exeunt, and enter SAUL, ZIPHITES, and SOLDIERS.]

SAUL.

Angels or demons,
Which of you is it that delivers him ?
Again the snake has glided from my grasp.
What traitor doth forewarn mine enemy ?
He is elusive as the wandering wind,
Or shadow grasped by the infolding fist,
That, opening, finds 't is empty.

(Enter a MESSENGER.)

MESSENGER.

Is the King

Here ?

SAUL.

Here he is. Hast thou seen David ?

MESSENGER.

No ;

But the Philistines ravaging the land.
Haste back, O King ; his Highness bade me tell you

He doubts his power to hold the foes in check,
So quickly swarm they on him.

SAUL (*aside*).

Curses light

Now on this twice foul fortune! (*Aloud.*) This is false.
Our son not sends thee hither.

MESSENGER.

Yea, my liege ;

And with stern words of hastening, which he bade me
Repeat to you, and bid you to yourself
Apply them thrice repeated.

SAUL (*aside*).

Is it so ?

Surely there is a Power that stands between
My purpose and its crowning! (*Aloud.*) Get thee
gone

With utmost diligence unto the prince,
And tell him that I come.

[*Exit MESSENGER.*]

The scene of sport

Hath changed, brave soldiers : we must hasten back ;
For out, full-mouthed, are the Philistine pack.
Hence are we bootless bound to leave this place,
And start forthwith upon a nobler chase. [*Exeunt*]

SCENE VII.

Gibeah. A hall in the palace.

MALZAH (*entering*).

Heyday, I've oft heard say
That, when God naps, the demons play.
Why am I here retained ? why must I still
With this untoward, gloomy king abide

Ever alone, nor know embrace seraphic ?
I'll hither summon Peyona. What, so ho !
Prithee come up, my consort, from below !

PEYONA (*rising*).

Malzah, what hath made thee call me ?

MALZAH.

Dost come unwillingly ?

PEYONA.

Why, no.

MALZAH.

'T is well, or — O, immense distraction ! —
But put thyself in capering action.
Come: I am in a moving mood.
Last time we danced was at the flood.

PEYONA.

O, is this falsehood or forgetfulness ? —
But thou mayest well forget, so long it is
Since thou forgot to play with me the gallant.

MALZAH.

Why, madam, how is this ? Have you forgot that
When I would dance, you always thus would preach ?
And even now you fall to contradiction. —
But dance, not talk ; for, just now, speech
Would give each carcass too much friction.

PEYONA.

I cannot dance to-day.

MALZAH.

Then I will make you. Music, ho ! I pray.
(*Music heard, and they dance together.*)

PEYONA.

I 'll dance no longer : let me from thee go.

MALZAH.

You have no urgent, pressing task below.
Slut, why request, then, to return so soon ?

PEYONA.

I must return, for I am called.

MALZAH.

Who calls thee ?

PEYONA.

I know not.

[PEYONA begins to descend.

MALZAH.

Liar ! O soft, deceptive eyes, —
Out, coals of hell, or I will tear you out.

[PEYONA disappears.

Disclose yourselves, ye dark and terrible gulfs,
That in immensity and eternal night
Have to this hour in sullen silence yawned,
And swallow her up ! — I 'll follow her to hell.

ZELEHTHA (*entering*).

Whither art thou bound ?

MALZAH.

To Acheron.

ZELEHTHA.

Stay here

Till I dismiss thee.

[*Exit.*

MALZAH.

I will stay no longer.
Grieve Saul thyself ; kill David ; ay, kill me :
For to live thus is worse than Tophet's torment.

SAUL (*entering*).

Now from one tumult pass I to another.
 From David 'scaped, I turned to the Philistines ;
 From the Philistines quelled, I turn to David,
 Who, on the stony mountains of En-gedi
 At present roams. Shall he elude me thrice ?
 Three thousand chosen men I 'll lead against him,
 And end him now with all his band of outlaws. [*Exit*

MALZAH.

I will end thee, — I 'll tear thee yet to pieces ;
 Kill or be killed, or die as other men :
 Then will my liberty be mine again.
 I do begin to find this task beneath me,
 And hate thee even as I hate Zelehtha. [*Exit*

SCENE VIII.

A wild, hilly district, with the mountains of En-gedi seen beyond, and the mouth of a cave in the foreground. Enter
 TWO SOLDIERS of SAUL's advance-guard.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Wilder and barrener this region grows ;
 Till naught but sheep, and they of smallest size,
 Draw from it sustenance. No fields of corn
 Are here, nor rye nor barley ; neither roots
 To fare the frugal shepherds, who appear
 Dwelling within the doors of blank starvation :
 A ~~meag~~, melancholy moorland, that
 Ascending keeps, until the sterile hills
 Seem to be hanging in the sombre clouds.
 What that hath life can harbor there ?

SECOND SOLDIER.

There lives

The wild goat only, and with snow still cools
His hot and lecherous blood. Nor bear nor fox
There dwelleth, neither wolf, — naught but the goat
And the heaven-searching eagle ; whilst the tempest,
Sullen, within the towering fastnesses,
Mustering its strength, sweeps thence far o'er the plain.

FIRST SOLDIER.

How awful doth it seem to pass a life,
Though but an animal's, amidst such horror
And constant solitude ! I almost shudder,
Though with a host, at thought of entering
Such a bewildering, wild world of crags.
What were we smitten by a waterspout ?
Or in a narrow gully (such might be)
Caught by a torrent sweeping from the peaks,
That had ripped up the clouds ? Or what if blown
Down from some scarpy side into the yawn,
That lies a thousand fathoms down below,
To batten there the vultures ; or perchance
Rolled down into some deep-worn channel stream,
To be by its fierce billows onward swept,
And buried in the ocean ?

SECOND SOLDIER.

Cease, I pray thee :

Thou dost infect me with an idle terror.
What ! do not David and his men live there ?

FIRST SOLDIER.

'T is said they do, and yet I know not how !
For though they may in caves find shelter, yet

They cannot eat the rock : nor herb that feeds
The barbed and shaggy denizens of those heights
Is sustenance for them : and the shy lords,
The goats, whose rule begins where man's must end,
How shall the swiftest hunter overtake,
Or his ascending arrow, when they spring
Up the jagged precipice, as sweeps the shadow
Of the swift cloudlet ?

SECOND SOLDIER.

I am told they span
As with a bridge, in their arched leap, a chasm ;
From whose sloped verge the hardiest shrink in horror,
Riding, as if with sudden gift of flight,
Its overhanging air. 'T is also said
That they upon their horns can safely drop
From crag to crag, — upon their crowns' strength proving
Themselves true kings.

FIRST SOLDIER.

Lo, where our own crowned king
Prepares to halt ; and our old general, Abner,
Makes wave the signal for our bands to rest.
Let us along, nor bivouac too near them.

[Exeunt, and enter SAUL and ABNER.]

SAUL.

Ere we commence this last and wildest stage,
Let us take needful rest. When once up yonder,
No rest is ours ; and the now travelled foot
Must with its soreness cope the untrodden way,
If way to yonder rugged realm can be ;
For nature in such hideous confusion
Was never seen before.

ABNER.

It were a mercy
To take the offender thence ; for there to dwell
Is surely lingering death.

SAUL.

To shorten pain
Is charity in whomsoever doth it.
The wretch condemned to die had best die soon.
And what is there in life that men so love it ;
What afterwards, that men should so fear death ?
We have remorse even here, and what can we
Have worse hereafter ? A foe is but a foe,
Whether he be before us or behind us ;
Or if with the expiry of the breath
Memory expire ; — if of the guilty past
Hereafter there remain no vestige, save
The soul's surmise that something is forgot,
As of the outburnt torch remains the fume,
Then better death than life to many men ; —
Or if this strange mind-malady of death
Be but incurable unconsciousness,
Then all are dead when sleeping, and all sleep ;
So all do die, and often, that do live.
I in this cave will strive to sleep a little,
Dying awhile that I may longer live ;
Live, as I hope, to yet see die mine enemy.
Let me be roused, if I repose too long.

[Exit ABNER, and SAUL enters the cave, and immediately MALZAH passes by.]

MALZAH.

I awoke, I awoke ; — I was not born,
I was not born like thee ;
But how long I 'd slept or ere I awoke,
None knoweth, only He.



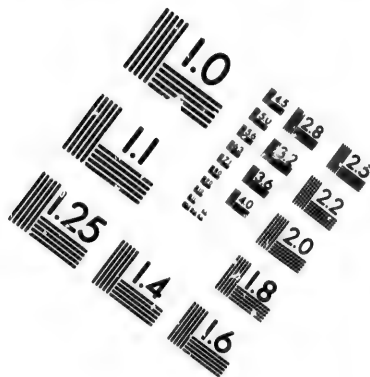
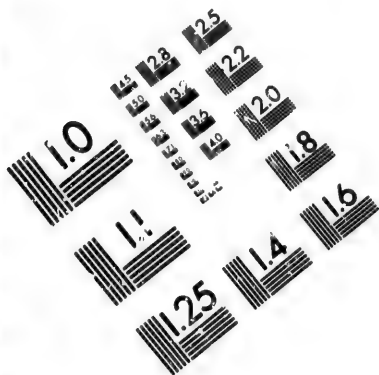
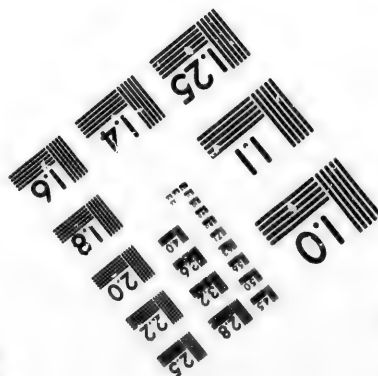
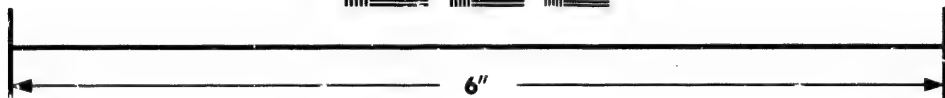
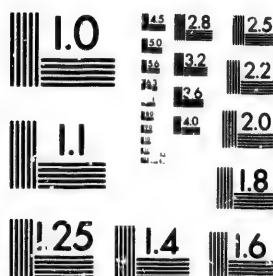


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I awoke in heaven, and many a day
I kept it, ere I fell ;
What were 'fore heaven I cannot say ;
Nor what shall follow hell.

Nor do I know how long shalt thou
Remain on Israel's throne,
Should David and his angry men
Discover thee alone.

*(Interior of the cave. SAUL lies down and falls asleep ; then
DAVID, ABIATHAR, and ABISHAI advance from amongst
their men, who are in the sides of the cave.)*

ABIATHAR.

Now, now the opportunity is come
To cut him off. Now wherefore shouldst thou scruple ?
Would he spare thee now, wert thou in his power ? —
Nay, I will not hear even thee plead for him !
Did he himself once listen unto pleadings,
Vented with agony and wringing hands,
For me and my dear father and my kindred ?
O, end him now ; talk not of his anointing :
For he, in our so impiously shed blood,
Himself hath washed the anointing from his heart.

ABISHAI.

Yes, end him ; for behold the hour is come
Of which God spake when He said unto thee,
“ I will deliver thy foe into thy power,
That thou shalt use him as thou may'st think fit.”
Nay, listen, David ; listen to us, cousin.

DAVID.

I will not listen to his taking off.

ABISHAI.

He will take thee off perhaps this very day.

DAVID.

The Lord defends me. I will not harm Saul.

ABIATHAR.

Is, then, my story naught? Hast thou forgot
The story of the day when all my kindred
Perished before his bidding? As the leaves,
Green and all juicy, and the boughs, still waxing
Lustier, of some brave tree, on sudden smitten,
Even in the verdant summer of its glory,
By the red bolt of heaven, their massacre.
O David, think it was at his fell order
That Doeg, the Edomitish infidel,
Set on my kindred, and the gory soil
Strewed with the carnage of a sacred race.
Think on the horrible destruction whence
I rushed, like splinter 'fore the woodman's axe; —
Think on the day when thou didst see approaching
My wounded self to thee.

DAVID.

I do remember;

Full well, Abiathar, do I remember:
But cease thy wild appeals to me, nor ask
Me, parricidal, to destroy the fount
And spring of Jonathan's and Michal's life;
Requiting his foul sacrilege, committed
On thee and on thy consecrated line,
By one upon himself. Remember Saul
Is still the Lord's Anointed.

ABIATHAR.

He is banned;

He is the Lord's no longer.

ABISHAI.

Cousin, go :

Retire ; thou shalt not see what we will do.

ABIATHAR.

Away ; stand back : I 'll kill him.

DAVID.

Cease, rash man :

Defile not thou thy sacerdotal hand,
Though I should let thee, which I do not mean.

ABIATHAR.

I will avenge me. Mine own arm shall work
Wherein thine fails thee. Moses had no shadow
Of my grim provocation, yet he slew.

DAVID.

Thou shalt not slay my father, and the Lord's
Anointed.

ABIATHAR.

He is doomed ; — stand back, I bid thee.

ABISHAI.

Cousin, I pray you take his life at once ;
And, in the taking of it, keep your own.

DAVID.

(Having approached and cut off Saul's skirt.)

I will take this, but not his life. In person
He is too near, if not too dear, to me.
For Michal's sake and Jonathan's, and more
Because he is indeed the Lord's Anointed,
I will not touch him vengefully.

ABIATHAR.

Howl ! howl !

For now there is no Blood-Avenger, who

Dare follow this vile king, whose 'circling crown
Is to him e'en a city of refuge' walls.
Ah, I perceive my words are all in vain!

DAVID.

(To his companions in the sides of the cave, having approached them.)

Here is the utmost verge that I will reach,
Against the King advancing. God forbid
That I should break yon consecrated vessel,
Although, its hallowed wine being spilled and drained,
It now stands foul and empty. Friends, beseech not:
I dare not hold him common, and life's flame
Quench in yon lamp by Samuel once made sacred.

(The BAND murmur; and SAUL having awoke, rises and leaves the cave, DAVID and his men coming forth into the midst of it.)

Remain you here: let no one follow me

(DAVID goes to the mouth of the cave, and, seeing SAUL at a little distance, departing, calls after him.)

Stay, stay, injurious King; O father, stay,
If I may yet so style you. Why dost thou
Listen to those who say I am disloyal?
Lo, in this hour, and in this very cave,
How easily could I have ta'en your life;
As some did bid me do, but I refrained.
"I will not harm," I said, "the Lord's Anointed."
In proof of which behold here your robe's skirt,
Which sole I took, yet could as easily
Have ta'en your life as it. Yes, look on this
Upbraiding proof; yes, look on this dumb witness,
Then stand convicted of injustice toward me.
Believe, O cruel and suspicious King,

That since I took but this and spared your life, —
At last, believe me honest. O my father,
Why hast thou ever deemed that I was other?
Why dost thou hunt me like a beast o' the forest?
Why should your Majesty thus chase a flea?
Why hunt a dead dog over these bleak hills?
Let the Lord judge between us; let the Lord
Be mine Avenger: for I will not harm you.
O that great Israel should have dread of me! —
Have dread of one so poor and weak as I!
For what could I do (e'en were I so minded)
Against your throne? and 'gainst your sacred form
I nurse no ill design: — believe me, I
Will naught against your seat or soul contrive:
Let the Lord be our judge; let him inquire;
Yes, let him plead my cause still with your anger;
Let him therefrom, at length, deliver me.

SAUL (*without*).

David!

DAVID.

My father!

SAUL.

David, is it thou?

Is that indeed thy voice, my lost son David?
Nay, I confess that thou art better than I;
Because I have requited thee with evil,
Whereas thou hast requited me with good.
Thou hast now proved thy past fidelity
And present friendship, by thus sparing me
When in thy power; for when foes come on foes,
They do not let them thus escape unhurt.
May God reward thee, then, for this forbearance!
And now I am convinced thou shalt be king,
And give a dynasty to Israel:

Then swear unto me by the Lord, that thou,
When thy strong hour of sovereignty is come,
Wilt not extirpate my posterity.

DAVID.

I swear it.

(Re-enters the cave).

SAUL.

It is well ; — repose in peace.
I will no more pursue him ; I am now
As some sad country that has long been harried
By predatory hordes, and that, decayed
By its own follies, vices, feuds, and factions,
Hath more to suffer yet from the barbarian,
Who shall at last possess it and o'errule. *[Exit.]*

SCENE IX.

Gibeah. An apartment in the palace. SAUL and JONATHAN.

JONATHAN.

I say your Majesty has not the right
To take again thus that which once you 've given : —
Nay, have not given ; for he bought my sister, —
Bought her of you with peril of his life.

SAUL.

Hast thou forgot that, by our holy law,
Parents may stone a disobedient child ?
They can retake the life which they have given :
How much more then may I, both king and parent,
Withdraw my child from an approved traitor, —
Traitor thyself ; for well I know thou lov'st him

Better than thou dost me or mother or sister.
Peace ; for thy sister is his wife no longer ·
She shall be given to Phalti.

JONATHAN.

Rather say,
She shall be stolen from David.

SAUL.

She is childless
Yet ; and I'll see there shall not be a creature
Evoked from the abysses of their love :
Though thou, I know, wouldst gladly see a being
Made up of Saul and David ; so that I
Could not destroy the one without the other.

JONATHAN.

Am I myself not next unto the throne,
In the due order of inheritance ?

SAUL.

Thou art ; but wouldst vacate for him that throne,
Didst thou possess it, and had I, being dead,
Lost power to punish thee for crown resigned,
And him for proudly seizing 't. He shall lose,
Not merely wife, but life : — yes, he shall die
Whilst I yet live ; for, whilst he lives, I cannot
Or live or die in peace.

JONATHAN.

What mean you ? — but
Do as you will, for it is many a day
Since you were ruled by reason. Yet some freak
We had indulged you in, but this last folly
Crowns David's wrongs, and heaps your deeds unholy.
[Exit.

SAUL

I have a sense which he hath not, or, if
He hath it, it is in him merely latent ;
A sense prophetic, that appears from him
Withheld by this strange friendship. Talk of love ;
Why, I love David much as he doth : David,
Unhappy man ! yet more unhappy I ;
He, as by destiny, rising towards the throne,
I all resolved till death to keep my seat,
And leave it to my heirs. How compass it
Is now the theme of cogitation ; how ?
If he could change his nature, — be no longer
That which he is ; and if he, being able,
Were also willing, — then 't were easily done.
Or could myself consent to a great humbling,
Forgetting that my children, in such humbling,
Would, too, be humbled, that way might the peace
Flow on between us, like a silent river
Which no keel ploughs, nor grim sea-monster churns
Oft into eddies and distains with blood, —
Then might we by degrees exchange our stations
And functions, even as the Sun and Moon
(With sweet consent, unbittered by dishonor)
Do in the sky, he rising to my setting.
But if he could his nature change, say, would he ?
Say, will the strong forego his strength, the wise
His wisdom, or the clever his skill ? No, never ;
Neither can I consent to leave the throne,
And all its regal honors alienate
From me and mine. The stars shall sooner fall
Each from its sacred altar in the heavens,
In which they glow like endless sacrifice,
Than that. That may arrive indeed, but not
(Though I, 't is true, begin to now grow old)

Till bright-eyed manhood is compelled t' assume
 The dull, cold stare of dotage. Thus confirmed
 By cool reflection ; my ever-burning impulse,—
 My instinct, being thus, by chilly logic,
 Inflamed like fire before the breath of frost,—
 I will pursue him to a mortal end,
 Will, with soul set upon a tragic issue,
 Hunt him into the cold, still shades of death,
 Since only by his death my line may live.

(Enter the ZIPHITES.)

Ah, my old friends ! What news ?

[The ZIPHITES whisper to SAUL, and then depart.

Ha, ha ! ha, ha !

In his old haunt on Hachilah of the wild,
 And doubtless thereon his old treason hatching !

(Enter an OFFICER.)

Three thousand men, with Abner in command.
 Well chosen let them be ; afoot at dusk
 To march where I shall wish them. *[Exit OFFICER.*

Prompt my deeds

Shall be henceforth, and close on the conception ;
 Between which and the nimble execution
 No space shall be wherein a doubt may lodge,
 Like moisture within walls, to freeze my will,
 Midst a cold winter of anxiety,
 Into irresolution, and, therewith,
 At last o'erthrow my firm-built purpose' frame. *[Exit.*

SCENE X.

Near the wooded hill of Hachilah. SAUL and his staff.

Enter an OFFICER.

OFFICER.

Your Majesty, your enemy has fled
Out of the covert fastness of the hill,
On to the savage plain.

SAUL.

On after him.

Bid Abner to advance his force with speed.

[Exit OFFICER.]

Straight all assist to get our men in motion :
The soldier rests no more than doth the ocean.

[Exeunt staff.]

Wherever he shall flee to I will chase him,
Though it be down to hell! Now come, kind Fate :
If ever I have well deserved of thee,
Now will I. All corporeal vigor, with the
Yet higher and stronger ministry of the mind,
I'll task unsparing, and be prodigal
Of present pains ; that I may spare pains when
The future comes, — may sit and play the fool
When pilfering years have made me weak and cool.

[Exit.]

SCENE XI.

The wilderness. Time, evening.

DAVID (*alone*).

Saul comes again to seize me, treacherous man !
Ungrateful monarch, when will he forbear ?

Arise to my relief, O Lord, rise quickly :
My spies inform me that, in very deed,
He yonder comes.

(Enter AHIMELECH the Hittite and ABISHAI.)

Good friends, what news ?

AHIMELECH.

The King

And all his force, compelled by weariness,
(For such unparalleled exertions, both
In speed and width of range of his advance,
Which, like the month of March astride the wind,
Driving before it winter's gloomy reign,
Were never made beforetime,) have encamped ;
But, adding wariness to weariness
Have round them dug a trench, to make secure
Their snatch of sleep.

DAVID.

So be it ; for the Lord
Surrounds us stronger than their trench can them,
Nor ever sleeps. Who 'll bear me company
Their camp to reconnoitre ?

ABISHAI.

I.

DAVID.

'T is well.

When night hath doubled her down-falling veil,
We toward them steal. 'T is favorable that
The moon is mobled up in thick-woven clouds.

ABISHAI.

The firmament is blank, and black as is
A yet unlighted hall : nor will the stars,

Mc.hinks, at any time to-night find favor
 To hold their tiny tapers in the air,
 And shed down light to expose us ; for the clouds
 Grow heavier, and more vapor cometh up
 From seaward.

DAVID.

Even so : let 's start at once.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE XII.

The camp of SAUL. Time, night. SAUL sleeping in the trench, his spear stuck in the ground near to his head. ABNER and the rest lying around him. Enter DAVID and ABISHAI, and approach to SAUL.

DAVID.

The King was wont to have his watch kept strictly.
 Step softly now. How odd to be thus found,
 (Walking by night a narrow plank of hazard,
 Over a gulf of foes, with whom as friends
 We once trod life's broad road in day's broad beam !
 I know the most of these who come to take me.
 See, yonder, Abner in the darkness lying ;
 And there see Gad and Dan ; and there lies Zohab ;
 And here, close at our very feet, behold
 The form to be distinguished midst ten thousand, —
 The King, my most unreasonable foe,
 My royal, wretched, raging persecutor.

ABISHAI.

Now, by Jehovah, he shall rage no more !
 Twice God hath given him to thee. Stand away,

That I may strike him ; — let him not escape.
Nay, hinder not, but let me now ; I 'll pin him
With his own spear to the earth, and with one blow,
That there shall need no second.

DAVID.

Madman, hold.

ABISHAI.

Release me ; for, by Heaven, from out his body
I 'll send his soul this instant down to Hell

DAVID.

Thou shalt not harm him.

ABISHAI.

I 'll not break his nap,
So quick and clean I 'll send his spirit forth,
That it shall seem still sleeping in his frame.

DAVID.

See how they all are sleeping. 'T is the Lord
That seals their senses.

ABISHAI.

And that seals Saul's doom.

Let me avenge thee : — I will do it for thee : —
Look thou another way : he is thy father.

DAVID.

And is he not thy king ? Thou impious man,
I will not let thee do it ; kill him not :
For who can take the life of God's Anointed,
And yet be guiltless ? There requires no haste :
For, sure as God rules kings, who rule the world,
God's self shall visit him ; or else his time
Shall come that he must die like other men ;

Or his gigantic figure shall descend
And perish, yet, in battle. God forbid
That I should lift my hand against the Lord's
Anointed, and to-night, unbidden, end
His gloomy reign! Now take his spear, that stands
There at his bolster, and the water-cruise,
And let us quick begone.

ABISHAI.

And leave him whole?
Let me impale him with the spear. I'll pin him
Down with it, as a lad would pin a fly.
Nay, this were fonder than the cutting off
Of his robe's skirt!

DAVID.

I will not let thee hurt him.
Obey at once: take them, and let us go.

[Exeunt, ABISHAI, taking the spear and cruise.]

SCENE XIII.

The top of a hill at a distance from the camp. Time, immediately succeeding that of the last scene.

DAVID (*shouting*).

Awake, awake, ye mockery of soldiers!
What, ho! awake, awake! O Saul, awake!
Abner, awake! Why answerest thou not, Abner?

ABNER (*from the camp*).

Who art thou that thus call'st upon the King?

DAVID.

Art thou not Abner, that thus answerest ?
And art thou not the highest in command ;
A veteran soldier, deeply versed in war's
Precautions, that forbid surprise ; albeit
Round royal Israel hast careless set
Unwakeful watch of slumbering sentinels ?
Who is there trusted like to thee, who art
The keeper of the King ? — then why hast thou
Not kept him better, and debarred approach
Of stalking danger ? for this night, behold !
Upon a stealthy and unnoticed foot,
Has been one midst you seeking Israel's life.
As the Lord liveth, ye deserve to die
For having failed to guard his own Anointed.
Was this the discipline when I was with you ?
Could this thing have been done when I commanded ?
For look ye where the King's spear is, and cruse
Of water, that was standing at his bolster.

SAUL (*from the camp*).

Who chides our chieftain, and who boasts of prizes
Ta'en from our presence and the jaws of death ?
Art thou not he for whom we long have sought ?
Can that again thy voice be, my son David ?

DAVID.

It is my voice. — O, if your Majesty
But knew my heart well as you know my voice,
You would not cruelly thus persecute me !
Tell me, my liege, yea, tell me, Israel,
What have I done that I am hunted thus ?
What ill intention do I harbor 'gainst thee,
That thou dost thus persist to seek my life ?

Twice have I spared thine own, when in my power ;
Twice, when thou knew'st not, stood 'twixt thee and
death.

Behold, I stole into thy camp this night,
With one Serce follower, thy deadly foe.
Deep sleep was on thy host, and on thyself ;
And, midst thy wearied watch, we walked unseen,
Until we stood before thee, lain supine ;
Hard by thy head, stuck in the ground, thine own —
But, as it seemed, our hand-awating — spear.
And hard my comrade urged me to thy death ; —
Yea, there was much to make thy death a deed
Of dread desert, and to absolve my soul,
If I had in thy blood my hands imbrued.
But did I fail thee in that hour, and yield
Thee to thy doom? How easy 't were! — none saw,
None heard ; a word, a look, — a motion, even, —
And thou hadst ceased to breathe, had ceased to reign.
No ; but thy cruel treachery and hate
I did requite with life-protecting love,
And loyalty that scorned the traitor's part :
Sleeping I left thee, even as I found,
And took but these, thy spear and water-cruise ;
Though on thy life-breath, in an angry snarl,
We 'd dire debate, like spectres in a dream,
I left thee scathless, and my comrade made
Thus leave thee, though he panted for thy blood.
Why dost thou pant for mine? What baleful spirit,
Vindictive, prompts thee? Hear me, Israel, now,
O hear me, thou insatiable Saul ;
If it be God inciteth thee against me,
Let me appease him by an offering :
But if, instead, it be but wicked men,
Be they accurst in his most holy sight ;

For they at length have forced me into exile,
Saying, "Worship false gods, in false temples bow."
Cease longer seeking, then, to spill my blood
Before God's face ; for I will go from Israel.

SAUL.

Where'er thou go, may thou be blest for this !
David, I am convinced I have done wrong ;
For since thou hast again respected me,
I am persuaded thou dost deem me sacred.
Return ; I will no longer seek thy life.
Let Heaven do whate'er it hath ordained :
My hand shall never with thy blood be stained.
I've played the fool ; thee outraged grievously.

DAVID.

Behold, O King, your spear ! Send one to fetch it
And may God render unto all of us
According to our justice and forbearance.
How I have twice forborne to take thy life,
When it before me lay, like a lost jewel,
He who beholds all deeds knows even as thou.
Let him judge now between us : and since I
Continued to regard your life, so may he mine
Continue to preserve, and save me from you.

SAUL.

Fear me no longer ! Thou hast killed my malice
This night by not killing me, but fearing God ;
Whose blessing be upon thee, my son David,
For thou art destined yet to do great things,
And shalt still over all thy foes prevail.
I swear that I will never more molest thee.

SAUL.

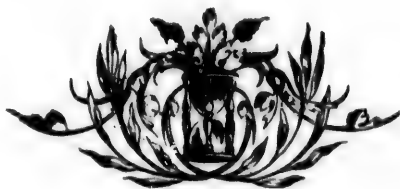
391

DAVID.

Despite his oaths, I know that by his hand
I yet shall perish, should I stay in Israel.
Naught better is there left for me, than that
I should escape at once into Philistia ;
So that he shall despair to find me more.

[*Exit.*





ACT VI.

SCENE I.

Gibeah. An apartment in the palace. SAUL and an OFFICER of the royal household.

OFFICER.

Your Majesty, David hath shelter sought
With Achish, King of Gath.

SAUL.

There let him stay,
And never be his name more mentioned here.
Leave me, and see my latest orders done.

[Exit OFFICER.]

Samuel is dead, and I prize life no longer ;
My children hate me, or, at best, despise me ;
Ahinoam is mouldering in the grave.
I am forsaken now of God and man ;
For though no one dare openly rebel,
No more exists that fond alacrity
Shown to my hests when first proclaimed my reign.
Now all are slow, and must be bidden loudly ;
Or if there be in some a show of zeal,
'T is but eye-service.

(Enter a COURIER.)

Well, what is thy news ?

COURIER.

My liege, of the Philistines, who have crossed
Once more our border, and encamp at Shunem.

SAUL.

Before I bid them welcome, say their numbers.

COURIER.

In truth, 't was hard to count ; but they are greater
Than e'er before were brought against your arms.

SAUL (*aside*).

At length I feel that I am growing loath
To meet them, hazarding my life for others.
And yet why cherish 't, since I prize it not ?
How sayest, sirrah, thou knowest not their numbers,
But knowest they are more than former hosts ?
"The more the merrier" is the word at revels ;
And, more their numbers, more our sword shall revel
Up to its neck in blood, and, as a drunkard
Over his cups is loath to journey home,
So shall it grieve to return unto its scabbard.
Go, get thee some good cheer, for thou look'st weary.

[Exit COURIER.]

Now come, thou butcher Saul, thou man of blood,
Rise up and kill ; rise up within thyself.
What matters what thine enemy's numbers are,
If thou and thine be yet as once they were ? [Exit.]

SCENE II.

Another apartment in the palace.

MALZAH (*slowly pacing to and fro*).

Alas, alas !

If I were mortal I should now expire,
From rumination and forced solitude.
To be restricted to these palace walls,
Is nearly as intolerably dull
As to lie hatched i' the compass of Saul's skull
(As late I did), like chicks within their eggs : —
'T is more ; for 'tween each moon's new birth and full,
I could abandon it to stretch my legs.
Why am I still retained by Heaven's warden,
Who no more urges me to enter Saul ?
Yet sure I feel her influence slackening ;
And Saul's gone to the wars, and (strange for him)
Loath and despairing : all which seems to tell
That I, full soon, shall bid to him farewell.
Poor, wretched monarch, he is ever gloomy :
And though at times he strives to shake off sorrow,
As I have seen an old and half-blind eagle
Shake out its haggard pinions o'er its eyrie,
Then wind with youthful speed into the skies,
True cheerfulness of heart is from him gone.
Why did I ever, thoughtlessly, engage
To make his soul more wretched than mine own !
I have my moments of insane delight,
But he is never pleasant, never glad.
'T was in an evil hour I came to tempt him :
For this most vile transaction ends not here ;
But I shall ever self-up/raidings know
Oft as I meet him in the realms below.

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.

Gilboa. The Hebrew camp. Enter SAUL and a Hebrew GENERAL.

SAUL.

The foe hath marched on Aphek : we must wheel,
And plant our answering standards on Jezreel.

[*Exit GENERAL.*]

With Gilgal in my memory, and all
The evil done and suffered by me since,
I fear to fight this last and greatest host,
Without some sacred sanction ; and repent
Now, more than with my old and fixed remorse,
The slaughtering of Nob's prophets, though they were
Fomenters of rebellion to a man.
And well I know that I was then possessed ;
I know that I was then beneath the demon ;
Therefore Jehovah may be merciful,
And, not imputing it to me, yet answer ;
For I will order that his priests forthwith
Assemble on this hill and seek him for me.

(*Enter ABNER.*)

Abner, how seem our men ?

ABNER.

They seem to think
Defeat and death are surely waiting for them.
To take them to the assault, or with them hope
To bear the brunt of battle when it comes,
'T were fond as hope to stop an avalanche
With yielding air, or falling rocks with water.

SAUL.

I know that they, as once they did at Gilgal,
Increase each other's bodings by communion.
But hear it, and then wonder at it, Abner:
I have resolved on what may give them courage;—
I have resolved again to seek the Lord:
His priests shall seek for me his Oracle.

ABNER.

'T is joy to hear you uttering such words:
And not a soldier but will swear new fealty
To you and yours, when hearing of such purpose.

SAUL.

I know not that. — However, gather thou
The priests, to ask the Lord what he doth wait
For me to do, — me whom they still must hate.

ABNER.

Be this but the beginning of fair days!

[Exit ABNER.]

SAUL.

I feel that I, at last, am come unto
The crisis and the pivot of my fortunes.
Long lost amongst dark mounts and crags, at length
I stand upon a pointed pinnacle,
From which I shall ascend into the sky,
Or topple to the abyss.

[Exit.]

SCENE IV.

Aphek. The Philistine army deploying. At length appear
ACHISH, King of Gath, and his force, followed in the
rear by DAVID and his six hundred men. The Philistine
PRINCES observing.

FIRST PRINCE.

Now, by great Dagon, why are these found here?
Shall we bring danger to our midst, and hug it
As though it did not bare its bristling teeth,
And snarl and scowl upon us, from Jezreel?
By Baal, 't is the maddest thing I've known,
To press a proven enemy to our bosom. —
'T is well we've seen this, ere too late perceived
In the dim midst of battle's storm and struggle.

SECOND PRINCE.

Well said, my gallant lord. Shall we by day
Receive the accomplice of a band of thieves
Into our house, so that he may have power
T' open its doors at midnight to the burglars?
Gath, wherefore hast thou hither brought these fellows,
Who in the battle must perforce be traitors,
Or unto us or to their king and country?

THIRD PRINCE.

Nay, in the name of safety, this is seeking
To perish by the alien hands that hate us.

FOURTH PRINCE.

O, lower than the lowest leap of folly,
Achish, to trust Philistia shall find
Faithful auxiliaries in yon Hebrew band!

FIRST PRINCE.

Let them return ; — or stay and guard the baggage :
They shall not mingle with us in the fight.

ACHISH.

Peace, angry cousins : he who at their head,
Tallest, comes like a galley's prow, is David,
Deep implicated enemy of Saul.

THIRD PRINCE.

Do we not know him, even to our cost ?
Be not your Grace deceived. Let him withdraw ;
Lest he, betraying, should upon us turn,
E'en in the midst and imminence of the strife.

FIRST PRINCE.

That will he, when the battle grows embroiled.
What ! shall we take a headsman to the field,
Whose practised arm may toward us fatal wield ?

FOURTH PRINCE.

Too-generous Gath, imagine not for that
He feeds now at thy hand, that thou hast tamed him.
As the wild beast borne to its native woods
Forgets his keeper and attempts to tear him,
So shall thy client, found among his nation,
Regain towards us his old injurious bent.

FIRST PRINCE.

Hath not the beast oft tasted of our blood ?
Did he not buy — plebeian that he is ! —
Saul's daughter, his so lately royal wife,
With — O dishonor, shall I name it ! — with
Twice told a hundred foreskins ? — and what better
Shaggy peace-offering could he take to Saul
Than were our heads ?

SEVERAL PRINCES.

Slay him !

SECOND PRINCE.

By Dagon, and his prone, affronted image,
Broken before their Ark ! Gath, hadst not sworn,
He and his band should now be cut to pieces.
Let them begone, for fear they die before thee,
To appease vexed Dagon and the grieving manes
Of the Philistine legions he hath slaughtered.

FOURTH PRINCE.

Deem us not timorous, my Lord of Gath ;
We have sound reason for suspicion ; for
One-sided favors breed no sterling friendship.
The breathing for a while a foreign air
Corrects no native tartness of the blood,
More than tide-waters, cupped within the hand,
Do lose the native saltness of the sea.
Let him retire : whate'er he was, he is.

ACHISH.

Chide me no longer ; for he shall begone, —
Though better or more faithful have I none.

FIRST PRINCE.

My Lord of Gath, see to it.

THIRD PRINCE. .

Do so, my Lord ;
For 't is not well this recreant stay here,
To rouse our wrath or put our souls in fear.

[*Exeunt the PRINCES.*]

ACHISH (*to DAVID, who has now approached him*).

David, those lords, my princely peers; mistrust thee.
Thou must return, for their displeasure 's high.
Yet do I find thee unimpeachable,
And grieve to lose the service of thine arm.

DAVID.

My kind Protector, say what have I done,
Since I have found asylum in Philistia,
'That now I am suspected?

ACHISH.

Ask me not.

Thou art as faultless now in my esteem
As were a ministering angel of thy God
Faultless in his great service; yet our princes
Have, with bad unanimity, declared
Thou shalt not with them play thy part i' the field:
Hence, soon as dawns to-morrow's streaking light,
Haste back to Ziklag; lest the Amalekite
Ravage the south, and, on the wings of ire,
Consume thy substance with swift sword and fire.

[*Exit* ACHISH.]

DAVID.

They do mistrust me with a grounded dread.
To Ziklag let me go, nor wish to stay
And, perhaps, see issue of disastrous day;
For howsoever the event may fall,
It must be hurtful or to me or Saul.

[*Exit*.]

SCENE V.

Jezebel. Time, the morrow. Enter SAUL and ABNER.

SAUL.

Rapid this march hath been ; — but O, I 'm sad.
The prophets have not honestly inquired ! —
No wonder ; — neither wonder what I 'll do.
I will have knowledge of a kind beyond
That of my present insight. In dark hour
I persecuted those who dealt with spirits.
Why did I it with o'er-officious zeal,
To please Jehovah, who now leaves me darkling ?
Nay, lock not grave, Abner ; rebuke me not :
My mind is bent unto my altered lot.
Find for me now, I charge thee by our kinship,
One that hath gotten a familiar spirit.

ABNER.

Good cousin, pray have not recourse to witchcraft !

SAUL.

It is the best craft going : for since Samuel
Died, priests are all impostors ; and the line
Of Aaron, long imagined half omniscient,
Are blank as other men.

ABNER.

What would you do ?

This is the very moving of despair :
And never did despair yet win a field,
Or sable doubt yet yean white victory !

SAUL.

I can no longer live, coz, thus ! O, I
Could live on hope, as the chameleon

Is said to live on air ! but faith has ceased
To animate me in these latter years ;
And what there is hereafter, I have lately
Forgot to fear, as long since ceased to hope for.

ABNER.

Nay, cousin, cease ; or I indeed must leave you.

SAUL.

E'en strife and change can now but feebly stir me.
I feel I'm growing old ; and creep along
The remnant of my shortened days of age,
Indifferent, toward where looms desolate
Death's sullen land. As a tired traveller
Crosses a dull, monotonous, windy common,
Beyond which lies his goal, some smoky town,
Like him I journey to some foul obscure.
O, I am sick to the bottom of my being !
And there is no physician ; no going back
To youth, and health, and herd-keeping in Gibeah.
They say that beggars may not choosers be ;
And I have knocked at heaven's door in vain,
So I will e'en betake me to another ;
For some superior guidance to mine own
Mere veteran skill and courage have I will.

ABNER.

But it is said that all familiar spirits
Are spirits of evil.

SAUL.

Than myself there'll be
More evil none, not one more desperate.
I will inquire myself, for I am set.

[Exit.]

ABNER.

I tremble : for I fear the hand of doom
Is on him, since no good may come from such
Dark consultation ; and it hath been said
None seek such, only they from whom God's fled.
I'll after him ; for, once this purpose known,
'T will soon be bruited over all the army.

(Re-enter SAUL and a SOLDIER with him.)

SAUL.

The devil's found much sooner than the Lord,
By those who dare to seek him. This man says
There is a woman now near Endor living
That speaks by help of a familiar spirit.

(To the SOLDIER.)

Thou shalt go with me to her. — Ah, thou palest !
Why shouldst thou fear that which thou art thyself,
A ghost ? Doff this surrounding of the flesh,
And thou art even that whereof we speak.

SOLDIER.

Hear me, your Majesty : I have two comrades
Who have no touch of terror in their souls
For either angry wraith or frowning fiend,
And who, at the great bidding of the King,
Would dare the very devil in his den.

SAUL.

Go fetch them me : they are the very men.
I will to-night be with the witch at Endor,
Put her in peril and from it defend her ;
For that great oath which I 'gainst such have sworn,
I break myself in my estate forlorn.
How art thou, Abner ? Come, good mate, be cheery,

Although this season is but dark and dreary,
I prithee, cousin, do not let us quarrel.
I go disguise me in some plain apparel.
See that it is not known where I am gone ;
And be my absence hid from Jonathan :
And may the powers that rule within the air
Hold all until to-morrow in their care.

ABNER.

I dare not say Amen to that. — But go ; —
And may your errand work you little woe.

SAUL.

Whate'er it work, my will shall not abate
To know the best or know the worst of fate.
But chiefly to the Endor witch I go
'To be informed what 't is that I should do.
Alas that I should to such strait be driven
By an old quarrel with resentful Heaven !
Or, as I doubt, mere priest-fomented feud,
Inveterate, being mixed with their own blood.
On Samuel may the feud's accountment fall,
And the blood be on the fiend that stirred my gall.
He goes as gay, but sad at heart is Saul. —
Abner, wilt with me to my toilet come ?

ABNER.

Lead on, I'll follow ; but with dread I'm dumb.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE VI.

Gibeah. The court-yard of the palace. Time immediately after that of the last scene.

MALZAH (*running in wildly*).

O joy! How sweet is liberty regained!
I feel that I am free; I cannot doubt it.
Let me begone from these abhorred precincts:
Yet not without a look: I cannot curse them, —
I cannot curse them in this happy mood,
So happy is it, that I 'm growing good.
Prosperity would renew in me the angel! —
How old this palace doth appear already!
But all around it and beyond seems young.
Nay, the wide world will now seem new to me,
And as romantic as at first did heaven.

(*A female servant crosses the court.*)

Ah,
There 's the sly slut that rated me so often
For entering her master. Shall I tease her
With swelling 'neath the waist, thick ankles, fleas, or
Black nipples, pimples, or the like; or even
Give her the erysipelas in the face,
That she may seem a young and fiery drunkard?
Shall I so blight her now that none will woo her?
O no: I cannot harm her in this vein,
For joy has drawn from me my sting of mischief.
I will believe in goodness from this hour.

But how I talk! Now let me fly,
On legs of love and wings of joy;
And peep into each crystal glass

Of fountain, as I by it pass,
To see if from my visage go
The traces of my recent woe :
Then blithely let me journey on
To meet Great Zaph ere sets the sun, —
Before the sun sets 'neath the sea,
Again to Zaph re-render me. [Exit.

SCENE VII.

*A forest near the sea. Time, evening. ZAPH seated, and
ZEPHO standing near him.*

ZEPHO (*aside*).

At eve
How happy in these upland shades,
To mark the sun through vista glades! —
To mark the sun set o'er the sea,
While slumber comes o'er Zaph and me! —
My master is about to speak.

ZAPH.

Zepho, the sun's descended beam
Hath laid his rod on the ocean stream ;
And this o'erhanging wood-top nods
Like golden helms of drowsy gods.
Methinks that now I'll stretch for rest,
With eyelids sloping toward the west ;
That, through their half transparencies,
The rosy radiance passed and strained,
Of mote and vapor duly drained,
I may believe, in hollow bliss,
My rest in the empyrean is.

Watch thou ; and when upcomes the moon
 A-towards her turn me : and, then, boon,
 Thyself compose, 'neath wavering leaves,
 That hang these branched, majestic eaves :
 That so, with self-imposed deceit,
 Both, in this halcyon retreat,
 By trance possessed, imagine may
 We couch in heaven's night-argent ray :
 For fond 't were not to make this earth
 All that to us it can be worth ;
 Which is (from out the major driven)
 To appear to us a minor heaven.
 But few things are what they appear, —
 The smoothest 'neath the face are riven ;
 And 't is as safe to slumber here
 As, Zepho, erst it was in heaven :
 So here I lie, since it doth seem
 I soon shall sleep, perchance shall dream.

A VOICE (*trolling merrily*).

I'm coming, I'm coming along in my glee :
 I'm in the odor of sanctity ;
 And to stay therein I've sought each bloom
 Whose saintly mouth doth vomit perfume.
 A holy, holy, holy rent
 Mine own mouth is, that thus gives vent :
 I'm purged with sun and washed with dew,
 And girt with woodbine, coming to you ;
 Coming to you,
 Coming to you,
 Ha, ha ! ha, ha ! I'm coming to you.

ZAPH.

What cawing rook is that ?

*SAUL.**ZEPHO.*

I'll look, sir. Oh!

It is a spirit that you know, —
Malzah, that fool, that carrion crow.

ZAPH.

Malzah escaped? Why, then, there's news.

ZEPHO.

He doth his angel-form abuse.
Like naught in hell, like naught in heaven,
Nor earth-born; — up to frolic given,
He cometh like a moving grove,
Covered with creepers quaintly wove;
Half like an ivy-covered tower,
And partly like a spreading bower:
'T were hard, indeed, to find a name
To designate aright the same:
A whole whose parts are jessamine,
Sweet-brier, and fragrant eglantine,
With cedar sprays and slips of fir,
And southern-wood and lavender.
Upon his crown, that bold he rears,
A monstrous heliotrope appears;
And central hung, beneath his nose,
An odorous, celestial rose;
While lily-cups, perhaps filled for drouth,
In white festoon surround his mouth;
And buttercups and scarlet bean
Do vallance, like pied beard, his chin.
Upon his cheeks, like beds of bloom,
Are mignonette and marjoram;
And balsam precious, from his ears
Protruding, bunched profuse appears.

Likewise a zone around him hung
Of various berries quaintly strung,
And rambling, tendrilled, fragrant pea
Around his rambling legs I see ;
And he, as hitherward he hurries,
Fool's-parsley 'tween his fingers carries,
While, still to keep the whole together,
He has procured the woodbind's tether,
And, as i' the midst, his eyes appear, —
They wear a wild and jovial leer :
Most different he, thus pranked around,
A green buffoon, than when I found
Him lately looking lean and bare,
Save covering of official care,
In Gibeah carked, and void of sense,
Save void on me his insolence.

(Enter MALZAH, tricked out grotesquely with foliage and flowers.)

ZAPH.

Fellow, how now ? an owlet's eyes
Would see through that thin, green disguise :
Thou 'rt Malzah ; and, to my surprise
And pleasure, com'st. What news dost bring,
That thus I heard thee gayly sing ?

MALZAH.

I've long been sad : 't is time a cock should crow
When morning breaks. I do not say I sing,
But ever and anon I gushing throw
My note, like cuckoo's on an eve in spring.

ZAPH.

Rich through the evening air we heard thy voice
Borne nearer, vassal. Thou hast escaped from Saul ; —
But how ?

MALZAH.

Out of a melancholy muse, —
As from the big, oblivious blank o' the Past
I first awoke and felt that I was Malzah, —
In joy I woke, as if from out a dream,
And felt that I was liberated ; then
Forthwith came hither, past the Hebrew camp ;
Whence Saul this day unto a witch hath gone
To seek advice, since God to him gives none.

ZAPH.

'Tis well :
He shall have counsel from the depth of hell.
What is his present and particular plight ?

MALZAH.

A piteous one : composed of doleful cheer, —
That last, worst state, despair combined with fear.
For the Philistines have invaded Israel
In greater multitude than heretofore ;
And conscience, for the slaughter of Nob's priests,
Now on him presses with forebodings sore.
I fear his course is drawing to an end.

ZAPH.

I thought these witches were beneath his ban.

MALZAH.

They were ; — but who on prey hath never pounced,
Which once, to others, dirty he pronounced ?
The Israelite is famishing for knowledge.

ZAPH.

His host encamps on Gilboa ?

SAUL.

411

MALZAH.

No, not now ;

But in the fruitful valley of Jezreel.

• ZAPH.

At once from land and sea my spirits I 'll call.
My flighty Zepho, for them posting go.

ZEPHO.

I 'll bring them to you in a trice or so.

[*Vanishes.*]

ZAPH.

Samuel is dead ; but my revenge survives,
And will while Gloriel in triumph thrives.
So let me all my energies arouse
To thwart the side that Gloriel shall espouse ;
Whether it be the huge Philistine host,
Or Saul to drive them homeward from his coast.
May Zepho find my servants easily !
So swiftly passes Zepho through space' field,
He looks back laughing at the gash, unhealed,
Given to her by the passing of his form,
Which swifter is than thought, or sunbeams warm.

MALZAH.

Methinks he wastes, grows leaner and more bare,
From frequent straining through the sieve o' the air.

ZAPH.

We learn thou lately played'st the insolent towards him.

MALZAH.

Sir, Zepho lately came, your messenger
To me at Gibeah : — most ill-timed he came ;
And I, preoccupied, did deem him merely
Some curious truant ; — for, upon my honor,

I knew him not ; — so, after thinking thus :
 ‘ Never yet genius wrought its masterpiece,
 But it was vexed with gazers,” I addressed him
 Curtly, and, as I now believe, in jest ;
 Deeming the semblance of good-humor best. —
 Meseems he’s slow in gathering your servants.

ZAPH.

They’re nearing ; for I hear their roar,
 Like billows tumbling to the shore.

(Enter ZEPHO and the DEMONS.)

This is done well. None can more prompt than you,
 When you desire your discipline to show.
 Now take with me, in circles high, your flight,
 To drop upon Jezreel when drops the night ;
 There to avenge (if may) the wrong that fell
 On us at Michmash from proud Gloriel ;
 When, to assist the valiant son of Saul,
 Beneath the ground he made us shake and crawl.
 [Exeunt, soaring through the top of the forest.

SCENE VIII.

Endor. Outside of the WITCH’s house. Time, night.
Enter SAUL in plain garments, and TWO SOLDIERS
attending him, but disguised as his companions.

SAUL.

By the description, this must be the dwelling.
 It stands alone, is ample, yet a hovel ;
 With only one small window, that can scarcely
 Admit sufficient light, even at noonday,
 To chase thence darkness. Doubtless ’t is the place :
 It seems fit habitation for dark rites.

Decay seems to possess it, and around
Mute in the dimness looms dilapidation.
Knock thou, and make inquiry of who comes.

(The FIRST ATTENDANT knocks gently.)

She comes not. Knock again ; and louder this time.

(The ATTENDANT knocks a second time.)

(Aside.) Danger hath made the creature cautious ; and
as I

Seek, in the darkness of my present plight,
To peer through her skill's medium, and learn
What were the best that I should do, so she,
Perchance, is, from the darkness of her dwelling,
Noting us through the casement, so that she
May know if to admit us. Some one comes.

*(The door is slowly and partially opened by the WITCH, who
stands timorously within, with her hand upon the latch.)*

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Lives here the Wisewoman ?

WITCH.

What Wisewoman, stranger ?

There lives a woman here both poor and lonely.

FIRST ATTENDANT.

And is she now alone, and art thou she ?

WITCH.

I am the only woman dwelling here. —
You surely have not hither come to rob me !
Alas, what is there in this place forlorn ?

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Art thou the Witch, and art thou now alone ?
Tell us, for we are seeking to consult her.

WITCH.

And were I both, pray what would you want with me ?
'To inquire of such were now a misdemeanor,
Did any still survive beneath Saul's rigor.
Witches are none in Israel now thou knowest.

SECOND ATTENDANT.

Fear not : we are honest men. Art thou the witch ?
For we are told that hereabouts there dwells one.

WITCH.

Art thou not mad to ask me such a question,
When such are now not to be found in Israel ?
Then how darest use that dangerous name towards me ?
Why come ye laying snares for a lone woman ?

SECOND ATTENDANT.

We lay no snares ; but art thou not the witch ?

WITCH.

What, I ?

SECOND ATTENDANT.

Yes, thou thyself. Do not to thee
The love-crossed wights and pining maids repair,
To learn their fate, or purchase from thee charms ?
Canst thou not tell where missing treasure is ?
Dost thou not prophesy who shall grow rich,
Who shall have fruitful wives, who disobedient
Children ; who early die, who live to see
Four generations and be called great-grandsire ?

SAUL.

Speak fearlessly. Art thou not one of those,
Who, in the weird sagacity of their art,
Foretell which course shall prosper and which not ;

What critical and pregnant enterprise
Succeed, and what result in black disaster?
Art thou not one of those proud sorceresses
Who have prevision, and the power to summon
Back to the world the spirits of the dead?

WITCH.

The wind blows cold: come in.

(They go in, and the WITCH closes the door.)

Enter this inner room; for I to none
Give entertainment in the outer one,
That the rude winds do enter, and, for aught
I know, where stands now at the door a wolf,
Which may to-morrow howl among the hills
That I to-night was hospitable to you.
How know I you're sincere! How do I know
But that you come to pry, and see if I
Be she who here (as goes, you say, report)
Follows the witch's now illegal art!
Ah, I suspect you; strongly I suspect you!
I like not thee, tall stranger: — thou'rt a spy,
And these men are thy witnesses. Ah, base
And cruel witnesses; for ye know well,
Full well ye know all three, what Saul hath done, —
How he hath put to death all female kind
Who had familiar spirits, also male
That dared commune with goblin, or foul fiend,
Spirit, or power of the invisible world,
Till not a wizard is left in all the land!
Then wherefore come ye three men unto me,
As though I were to conjurations given?
Why lay a snare for me, that ye may hale
Me hence to execution?

SAUL.

SAUL.

Peace. I swear—

WITCH.

What dost thou swear by?

SAUL.

By whate'er thou wilt:—

By hell, for thou 'st no interest in heaven.

WITCH.

How much hast thou? Swear to me by the moon,
That is the witch's workshop and arcanum,
From whence they cast on those who persecute them
All woes that body and that mind can bear,
Pain, horror. Swear, then, to me by the moon.

SAUL.

I will not swear unto thee by the moon,
But by the moon's Creator. As God lives,
There shall no mischief unto thee occur
For doing what I bid thee.

WITCH.

Thou hast sworn.

SAUL.

And I will keep mine oath.

WITCH.

I tell thee, stranger,
That thou hadst better; for I shall have given
To me thy soul in endless slavery,
If thou prove treacherous. Remember: and
Now say what I must do.

SAUL.

Divine to me

By thy familiar spirit, since thou hast one,
 And bring up him whom I shall name to thee.
 Begin thine incantations ; for the moments
 Fly, and I 've far to go and much to do
 Or ere the dawn.

WITCH.

Whom wouldst thou I should show thee ?

SAUL.

Show to me Samuel.

WITCH.

Samuel ! Thinkest thou

That he 'd appear for such as thou art ? No,
 He would not come for any less than Saul : —
 No, nor for him ; for he is now abandoned,
 And we whom he tormented are revenged.
 Long have they said that God has left him. — Well,
 Others have lost their souls beyond redemption.
 They say he has a demon — so have others —
 But come, I 'll disappoint thee ; for, remember,
 Samuel will not be roused for thee, although
 I 'll knock with thunder at his resting-place,
 And send my piercing Spirit (who, like frost,
 Can penetrate a rocky sepulchre)
 To project molten lightning through his bones.
 Prostrate yourselves ; nor, till I bid you, look
 At what shall lie before you soon agape,
 The yawn of Hades, the dark mouth of hell.

(SAUL and his companions fall prostrate.)

Ha hee ! ha hee ! ho ! Adramuel,
 Adramuel, Adramuel, thee show,

From sunny height or gloom below !
Adramuel, why is it so ?
Dost thou not thy mistress know ?

(A strange sound heard. Appear ADRAMUEL.)

O my sweet slave, O my dear friend and master,
Still, still so faithful to me ! Now go faster
Than do the fabulous coursers of the wind,
To Ramah, or to Hades, and bring Samuel.

[ADRAMUEL vanishes.]

(Aside.) Whither would not Adramuel go ? Brave
spirit !

If I command him, he would wind his way
Into the presence of the sons of God,
And there, although in vain, demand the prophet.
It cannot be ; for Samuel may not come
From Abraham's arms. I mock my mighty demon.
But whence this tremor creeping through my frame ?
Ah, I am strangely warped ! I have a loom
That he I've sent for will arise and come.
Be still, ye tottering limbs. Adramuel hastes ; —

(Listening.)

Adramuel nearer comes. I hear a mourning,
As if he bore within his arms
A soul that came unwilling to my charms.

(Bending forward as if to see something.)

Roll, roll away, thou Stygian smoke,
And let me into the abysm look. *(Shrieks.)*

(Crying with a loud voice.)

Ah, why hast thou deceived me ? — Thou art Saul

SAUL

Calm thee. What hast thou seen ?

WITCH.

O gods ascending.

Angels I saw or gods — I know not which —
 Out of the earth ascending, and another
 Borne up amidst them careful.

SAUL.

Of what form?

WITCH.

An old man, and uncovered with a mantle.

SAUL (*aside*).

'T is Samuel here again!

(SAUL bows his face to the ground, and the ghost of SAMUEL
rises.)

GHOST (*inaudible except to SAUL*).

Unhappy King, why hast thou summoned me,
 Out of the tranquil ecstasy of death? —
 Why hast thou troubled me to bring me hither?

SAUL.

I am in great distress, for the Philistines
 Again make war against me, and their hosts
 Invade my kingdom; whilst the Lord hath left me,
 And answers me no more by dreams or prophets,
 Neither by Urim's light nor kindling Thummim's:
 Therefore I've called on thee that thou mayest show
 me
 What I shall do.

GHOST.

Forsaken by Jehovah,
 Why hast thou thus resorted unto me?
 God now performs that which, by me, he promised
 To David, and now ends indeed thy reign;

The kingdom being no longer thine but David's,
Because thou hast been disobedient,
Nor didst God's vengeance upon Amalek.
Therefore God leaveth thee this hour in darkness. —
Yet, not obedient to charm or spell,
Wherewith thou wickedly hast sought to break
My slumbers, come I from my secret place,
To answer thee. Thou sorceress-seeking King,
God shall deliver thee, and all thy host,
Into the power of the Philistines. Go;
Thou and thy sons shall be with me to-morrow.

[SAUL faints away, and the GHOST and all supernatural
phenomena disappear with a dull sound.]

SECOND ATTENDANT.

'T is thunder, and it shakes to its foundations
This crazy dwelling. Lo, the witch's form
Doth tremble too, and is as pale as moonlight,
As, like to a detected culprit, there she
Stands with clasped hands, aghast at her own doing.

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Now may I ne'er again assist at magic!

SECOND ATTENDANT.

Nor I. This spectral visit hath surpassed,
In mighty horror, all my previous
Imaginations of another world.
The King has swooned.

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Quick; let us take him up.

(They raise SAUL.)

This was an impious act! What hast thou done, hag?

SAUL.

421

WITCH.

That which the King commanded me. See to him.

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Although I apprehend not all he knows,
I know it must be awful ; since the flash
Of that pale witch's shriek appalled me, and
The crack of her few words : O then, what must
Unto his heart have been the perfect peal !
He seems as dying : set him on the bed.

SECOND ATTENDANT.

What hath the vision told him, for thou knowest ?

WITCH.

Ask not, but help to raise him. This I know,
That he will not die here : he 'll rally yet.

SECOND ATTENDANT.

How knowest thou that ?

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Mark him ! — I do believe
That he will not go hence a living man.
O, I am sick myself, — and so art thou ; —
I shudder even to the very marrow !

SECOND ATTENDANT.

He lives ; but, O how corpse-like !

FIRST ATTENDANT.

We are all four
As pale as winding-sheets : my own voice sounds,
Methinks, sepulchral. — Man, express thy horror.
Thou seest not thyself : thine eyeballs roll,

As if from some great under-agitation,
Which yet sends no true billow-swell of phrase
Up to thy white-shore lips. Mine own feel stiffening,
As if with mortal chillness. See that creature,
How her teeth chatter! Witch, use thy croaking tongue,
And tell the worst that thou hast seen and heard.

WITCH.

Peace ; for the King returns unto himself.

(Casting herself at SAUL'S feet.)

Hear me, your Majesty. I have obeyed you,
And at your instance put my life in peril ;
Then do not punish me for what you 've seen.
Forgive my lying boast against you ; and
Permit me (in the safety of your oath,
Wherein you said no harm should happen to me)
To set some food before your Majesty,
That you may gather vigor to depart,
Since you declared that you had far to go
And much to do before the morrow dawned.

SECOND ATTENDANT.

Ay, thou hast done thy mischief, witch ; and now —

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Hist, hist !

SAUL.

What hour is it ? Have I slept long ? No, no,
I cannot eat ; why should I ? I 'll take nothing.

FIRST ATTENDANT.

We pray you do. Your Majesty cannot return
Still fasting ; and there is no time for rest
If you would reach Jezreel before the morning.

SAUL.

I cannot eat : I loathe both food and life.
(*To the WITCH.*) He came up like an old man, didst
thou say ?

WITCH.

I did, O King ; — but bid me cook some food.

SAUL.

Wouldst cook food for the dead ? —
What were they broiling in that hideous smoke ?

SECOND ATTENDANT.

He is the semblance of despair and horror !
He has beheld much more than we have done,
Or than we dream of. See, he sinks apace :
Urge him to eat, or he will never rise
Up living.

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Take some food, we pray, my liege ;
Your Majesty, be counselled. We oft put
Things disagreeable unto our mouths,
Which things we do call medicines, as they are ;
So be you now persuaded to take food,
However much in taking you may loathe it,
And think 't is medicine, for 't will so prove to you.

SAUL.

I will not : I 'm past cure.

SECOND ATTENDANT.

His Majesty

Knows that the army will require his presence.

SAUL.

Bring me some food, woman, quickly. [*Exit WITCH.*]

Ere the morn
 Shall tint the orient with the soldier's color,
 We must be at the camp. What watch is it?—
 Bring the food quickly. Hath the moon yet risen?
 Look out and tell me; look out at the window.

(*The FIRST ATTENDANT looks out at the window.*)

(*Aside.*) The last outlook has come, and drear it is!
 Far off the camp, far off seems morn, to me,
 Whose tent is pitched 'neath everlasting darkness.—
 (*Aloud.*) Well, what's the moon a-doing?

FIRST ATTENDANT.

Your Majesty,

With visionary dawn she is advancing
 Unto the whitening frontier of the east.

SAUL.

And yet she rises late to-night: she's old.
 We must begone, we must begone. Poor moon,
 She is old, and so am I!—Why comes not food?
 Bring food here with despatch; or the moon up heaven
 Will, with her ancient, silver feet, be treading
 Ere we upon our road. How old is now
 The moon?

SECOND ATTENDANT.

My liege, in her last quarter.

SAUL.

Then

I shall behold her this last time when she's
 An emblem of myself. Yet she'll return
 And rule the night; but I shall from my shade
 Come up no more!—Say, is the food a-coming?
 I have heard tell of culprits who have ravened

Upon the margin of their execution,
And I now feel an hungered. — Comrades, comrades,
You'll butchers be to-morrow, and can fatten you.
To-morrow — O, come thou dreadful morrow!

FIRST ATTENDANT (*to his companion*).

Mark.

SECOND ATTENDANT.

His mind is wandering.

FIRST ATTENDANT.

I know not that.

He has been warned of some dire mischief coming.

SECOND ATTENDANT.

And yet I'm sure he wanders. — O see, see,
How thought-fixed are his eyes, rigid his muscles!
His soul is toward the camp: it is not here.
He wanders homeward, like a poor lost creature
That through foul roads still drags its mired limbs.
Your Majesty, lie down, and rest whilst waiting.
The witch is making haste: I hear her busy.

SAUL.

No, no, not yet: there'll be a long lie down
Anon. Yes, presently there'll be a sleep
With time enough to dream in. (*Aside.*) O, how all
Like to a dream seems my career now closing!
How like a troubled April day it seems!
How like a famine-smit, disastrous year! —
(*Aloud.*) Will that foul witch be long?

SECOND ATTENDANT.

Your Majesty, no.

SAUL.

'T is well. (*Aside.*) As round some spent, delirious one,

Fallen, at last, asleep, the hand of friendship
 Draws the thin curtains, who shall draw around
 My memory apologetic shade ?
 For Ahinoam is dead ; and Jonathan,
 And Melchi-shuah, and Abinadab,
 Shall go to morrow with me, and the rest
 Are all too young. Yet Abner may remain
 And vindicate me somewhat. But if he,
 Too, die (for David will not curb the priesthood),
 Then I must leave a blotted name behind,
 And enemies whose pens shall slander me
 On biding parchment. No, not slander, surely :
 I would not abdicate. O love of rule,
 For thee I may have damned my soul to hell,
 Murdering for thee the sacred priests of heaven !
 It was the fiend, — yet will the fiend for 't suffer ?
 Shall I not be beneath with him to-morrow ? —
 How now ? The food, the food !

(*Enter the WITCH with viands.*)

FIRST ATTENDANT.

My liege, it comes.

SAUL.

Are these your sorcerer's victuals ?

WITCH.

Your Majesty,

Although these hands of mine prepared them, they
 Are pure as any that, by hands of priests,
 E'er did on altar smoke in holy rites.

SAUL.

The priests ! the priests ! — 't was Doeg's hands, not mine :

Mine are not red with Aaron's blood. See, see !
Who comes before me yonder, clothed in blood ?
Away, old man, so sad and terrible ; —
Away, Ahimelech, I slew thee not ! —
Nor these, — nor these, thy sons, a ghastly train.
Nay, fix not here your dull, accusing eyes.
Your stiff tongues move not, your white lips are dumb ;
You give no word unto the ambient air ;
You see no figure of surrounding things ;
But are as stony, carven effigies.
Ah, do you point me to your carven limbs,
That as I gaze upon them turn to snakes ?
Out, vipers, scorpions, and ye writhing dragons !
Hydras, wag not your heads at me, nor roll
At me your fiery eyes, nor shake your stings.
Avaunt ! away with you, ye are not men ;
Nor women, children, babes, nor embryos.
Of aught that 's human. (*To the Attendants.*) Why,
how now ? Fall on ;
From ceremony I absolve you both.
Nay, nay ; no more request me to partake.

(*The men begin to eat.*)

(*Aside.*) Why should a dead man eat ! — O that the dead

Could come again and live ! — that Aaron's sons,
While I in death put off my royal robes,
Revived, could fill again their sacred vestments !
Cannot the spirit live again in clay,
E'en as old tenants to old homes return ? —
Return to life, ye murdered priestly shades ;
Live in the sanctuaries of your ancient forms !

O Life, how delicate a thing thou art,
Crushed with the feathery edge of a thin blade !
Frail ! — why wert thou not made inviolable ?
Why art thou irrecoverable as frail ?
Thou, noblest guest, art all as much exposed
To foul ejection from the flesh as is
The spider from its web by maiden's broom.
Yea, with a little wielded iron, any
Can drive thee forth from thy recesses' walls,
Which thou wilt not repair ; for thou, weak fool,
At voice of death, from thine old banquet-room
Start'st like a haughty noble that, in huff.
Leaves his convives, and will return no more.
Why should I cherish thee, why feed thee now !
Yet I, a breathing corse, must mumble, — I,
A shadow, raise my sunken, phantom maw
With the refection of this solid world.

(Rising, after having eaten a little.)

Now let us go. Here, take these shekels, woman :
I pay thee for the evil thou hast shown me.
Live and repent of thy black arts, ere death
• Shall send thee where there may not be a whitening.
(Aside.) She may still live, be bleached with pious
sighs,
And showers of tears, and dews of holy deeds ;
But I must due, with foul sins on my head,
Betake me to the region of the dead.
(Aloud.) Lead, and unbar the door ; — and see thou
sellest
Amulets no more while on the earth thou dwellest.
What I have given thee will thy wants supply.
Amend thy life ; for thou, too, soon shalt die.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE IX.

Amidst the HEBREW camp. Time, night.

JONATHAN (*coming out of a tent*).

Why should I wake within my tent for darkness
Is on my soul as well as on the soil.
I cannot sleep ; and both my brothers toss
Upon their truckle-beds, and moan and mutter.
There's evil near us ; either of defeat
Or death to one or more of mine own race.
Strange that my father should be absent now !

(*Enter ABNER.*)

Who's there ?

ABNER.

A friend.

JONATHAN.

'T is like the voice of Abner.

ABNER.

Not like it, but the same. Thou'rt Jonathan,
And like me wanderest ghostlike, ill at ease,

JONATHAN.

Abner, there lies across my path a shade
That I must pass to-morrow ; let it be
Even the billows black of death's deep gulf,
Or a mere frowning shallow of a hazard.

ABNER.

To-morrow seems a space that I must clear,
Swept by a thick, continual shower of darts,
And which I shall not cross without many wounds.

SAUL.

JONATHAN.

But that my father hath forbidden thee,
I would command thee to inform me where
He is this hour.

ABNER.

Let us his narrow gap
Of absence fill with our sufficient presence.
Back to our tents. Good night. [Exit

JONATHAN.

Through this thick gloom,
And th' mask of my brave kinsman's countenance,
I saw a lurking grief. Where is my sire?
Where he is flies despair. Saul — father — come!
Why art thou absent on the eve of battle?
Come, sire, come, morrow, though thou dark dost loom!
Whate'er it be, 't is Heaven shall send the doom: —
Heaven send the dawn; soon let the trumpet's bray,
All cheerily blowing, reawaken day.

(Disappears among the tents.)

SCENE X.

The HEBREW camp in the valley of Jezreel. Time, morning.
Enter SAUL and ABNER, followed by JONATHAN, ABINADAB, and MELCHI-SHUAH.

SAUL.

Ask me no more to tell thee what the witch said.
(*Aside.*) I'll hide it to the last; and none shall learn,
Out of my mouth, that I am dead while living.

(*Aloud.*) Come hither, sons. (*Aside.*) O, now what shall I say?

(*Aloud.*) This is our latest field ; and should it prove
Our last one also (and it such may be),
Then let it be our noblest. Go, dear sons,
In this dark hour shine forth in dazzling deeds,
Striking, from the flinty courage of your foes,
Bright, everlasting honor. Jonathan,
Forget not what thou heretofore hast done,
And let thy star this day become a sun.
Away now to your posts.

[*Exeunt* JONATHAN, ABINADAB, and MELCHI-SHUAH.

(*Aside.*) Darkness and death ! —
But go, ye lights of Saul ; be quenched, be quenched !
O my poor sons, my sons, ye die for me !
For your mad father's follies you 're destroyed !

(*A trumpet sounds.*)

Now, like a charger at the trumpet's voice,
Now let me rush into this hopeless field,
And struggle till I perish. — O, but ye,
My sons, shall ye go too ? Shall ye, too, perish ? —
I will not send my children to their death !
I will recall them. — O, but to what end
Shall I recall them ? has not Samuel said,
To-day they march with me unto the dead ?
O, thither march, then, sons. — O sons, forgive me,
Who utter toward you such unnatural words ! —
Not mine but heaven's. O hell, upbraid me not,
Nor, loathing, spit upon me thy fierce scorn,
When, like a triple-offspring murderer,
I enter thee. O hell, I come, I come :
I feel the dreadful drawing of my doom.
O monstrous doom ! O transformation dread !
How am I changed ! — how am I turned, at last,

Into a monster at itself aghast !
O wretched children ! O more wretched sire ! —
Would that I might this moment here expire !

ABNER.

What can this strange commotion in him mean ?

SAUL.

See there how Abner stands
With wondering visage and with slackening hands !
Abner, away, and quickly form the field. —
Why should he watch me to my passion yield ?

ABNER.

O, sad this sight to these astonished eyes !

(Another trumpet sounds.)

SAUL.

Again the clarion to the battle cries.
(*To ABNER.*) Farewell to thee. — But understand me
right :
Do thou fare well, coz, in the coming fight.

ABNER (*aside*).

I 'm loath to leave him, but it must be so :
For never, since I knew him, have I seen
Him wearing such a strange, distracted mien.

[*Exit.*]

SAUL.

All have gone from me now except despair ;
And my last, lingering relics of affection, —
And now let them begone. O, break, sad heart !
Not those who soon shall die with me, but those
I leave behind, shall shake my manhood most, —
My orphaned daughters, and my youngest born ;

For the rest, we are passing unto one dark goal.

(After weeping awhile in silence.)

Now let me scorn all further tenderness ;
And keep my heart as obdurate as the hills,
That have endured the assault of every tempest
Poured on them from the founding of the world.

(Another trumpet sounds.)

Ay, blow thy fill, thou trump of martial breath.
Come war, come ruin, come, relentless death ! *[Exit.*

SCENE XI.

Between Jezreel and Gilboa. A great noise and uproar of the battle. Enter ZAPH and his band of DEMONS, including MALZAH.

ZAPH.

It is in vain ; for Gloriel and his troop,
Where'er we move, impenetrably standing
Between ourselves and the Philistine host,
Hinder our succoring of the Hebrew king.
Wheel off, then ; though our reasonable hate
Shall yet be glutted, in the teeth of fate.

[Exeunt, and the HEBREW ARMY pass, retreating .

(Enter SAUL.)

SAUL.

Drive back our flying cowards on the foe !—
But will the blast be stayed by its own howls ?
The doom on me weighs also on mine army,
Which, whilst it fiercely combats, flees before
The slaughtering Philistines. But Gilboa

Again shall see me on it standing firm ;
For they shall not hereafter say of me
That I was slain in ignominious flight.
O, had I been allowed to win this field,
Though, by its last expended arrow, doomed
To fall and finish thereon my career,
I had died happy ! for I 'm old though strong,
Wearied, although not spent. But this may not ;
And I must hence, since the pursuit grows hot.

[Exit.

SCENE XII.

*Gilboa. The sound of the battle heard faintly. Enter ABNER
and some SOLDIERS in haste and disorder.*

ABNER.

Where is the King ?
Go urge him from the field, that fast is clearing ;
But tell him not his three brave sons are killed.

[Exit SOLDIERS.

Alas, alas, alas ! now think I he
Foreknew their fate at parting ! O, the knell
Appears now sounded over Israel !

[Exit, and SAUL enters mortally wounded and sinks upon
the ground.

SAUL.

Now let me die, for I indeed was slain
With my three sons. Where are ye, sons ? O, let me
Find ye, that I may perish with you ; dying,
Cover you with my form, as doth the fowl
Her chickens ! O Philistia, Philistia,
Thou now art compensated, — now art growing

Rich with this crimson, hot, and molten tide ;
That waits not patient to be coined in drops,
But rushes, in an ingot-forming stream,
Out of the mine and mintage of my heart !
O my three poor dead sons, where are you ? Ye
Have gone before me into the hereafter
Upon such innocence-flighted steps,
That I, with feet cumberéd with clots of gore,
Shall lose of you all glimpse, and then my soul
Shall drop to the abyss. Gush faster, blood,
And gallop with my soul towards Hades swift,
That yawns obscure.

(A dull sound in the distance. SAUL rises somewhat, but falls again upon the ground.)

It is the enemy's horse !

(Enter SAUL'S ARMOR-BEARER.)

ARMOR-BEARER.

Rise, or the foe will be upon my liege !

SAUL.

I cannot, boy ; for I am dying fast : —
And yet not fast enough, it seems ; so draw
Forthwith thy sword and with it run me through,
Lest those uncircumcised arrive, to slay,
And afterwards abuse me.

ARMOR-BEARER.

O no, no :

I dare not take away your royal life !

SAUL.

Why shouldst thou fear to take what I would give?
Dispatch me quick : the enemy are here.

ARMOR-BEARER.

I dare not take away your Majesty's life.
I cannot do it ; nay, I cannot do it.

SAUL.

Failed by a friend at last !

(Taking a sword that lies on the ground near him.)

Ah, here is one
Of that stern sort that never yet failed Saul.

(Having risen with a great effort.)

Sword, enter, and drive out my troubled spirit !

(Falls on the sword, and expires.)

ARMOR-BEARER.

Now what remains for me except to follow !

(Also falls on his sword.)

[*The PHILISTINE CAVALRY sweep across the scene, and
carry off the corpse of SAUL.*]

THE END.

REVIEW OF THE FIRST EDITION OF SAUL.

From the North British Review for August, 1858.

OR "Saul: a Drama, in Three Parts," published anonymously at Montreal, we have before us perhaps the only copy which has crossed the Atlantic. At all events we have heard of no other, as it is probable we should have done, through some public or private notice, seeing that the work is indubitably one of the most remarkable English poems ever written out of Great Britain. This copy was given to the writer of the present article by Mr. Nathaniel Hawthorne, to whose recommendation of this, to him and to us, unknown Canadian poet our readers and English literature generally are beholden for their first introduction to a most curious work. "Saul" is in three parts, each of five acts, and altogether about ten thousand lines long. It is the greatest subject, in the whole range of history, for a drama, has been treated with a poetical power and a depth of psychological knowledge which are often quite startling, though, we may say, inevitably, below the mark of the subject-matter, which is too great to be done full justice to, in any but the words in which the original history is related.

The author proves that he knows the Bible and human nature. Shakespeare he also knows far better than most men know him; for he has discerned and adopted his method as no other dramatist has done. He takes not virtue and morality, and their opposites *generally*, as other dramatists do, but these under the single aspect of their dependence upon *spiritual influences*, of whatever kind: the direct influence of the Divine Spirit; and the influence of

good spirits ; and of the principalities and powers of darkness ; and even the mysterious influences of music, the weather, etc., upon the moral state of the soul. Like most of Shakespeare's plays, this drama has the appearance of being strangely chaotic. There are hundreds of passages for the existence of which we cannot account until the moral clew is found, and it would never be found by a careless and unreflecting reader ; yet the work is exceedingly artistic, and there are few things in recent poetry so praiseworthy as the quiet and unobtrusive way in which the theme is treated. In a work written upon this noble symbolic method, one is never sure of *exactly* stating the author's meaning, — indeed, as we have said of Shakespeare, the meaning is too full to be stated more briefly than by the whole poem ; but we are sure that we are not far from the writer's intention, when we say, that in Saul he represents a man who is *eminently* the creature of spiritual influences ; who is of the happiest sensitive and perceptive constitution, but lacks the one thing needful, the principle of *faith*, which would have given the will to submit himself to the good influence and resist the bad. "Faith wanting, all his works fell short," is the only *explicit* statement in the whole poem of this idea ; but the whole poem indirectly implies it. This view of Saul's character, which is amply justified by Scripture history, is carried out and illustrated with an elaborate subtlety of which it is impossible for us to give our readers an adequate idea. The evil spirit of the King is brought personally, under the name of Malzah, upon the stage ; and we are made to understand Saul's nature, and the nature of all who are the more or less passive slaves of natural and spiritual influences *ab extra*, by the exaggeration of this character in the spirit himself, who is depicted with an imaginative veracity which we do not exaggerate in saying has not been equalled in our language by any but the creator of Caliban and Ariel. Malzah is decidedly "well disposed," like many another evil spirit, human or otherwise ; he knows his faults ; is almost changed, for the moment, into a good spirit by artistic influences, especially music ; he has attained to be

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a deep philosopher through the habitual observation of himself; and does not at all like the evil work of destroying the soul of Saul, — a work which he undertook voluntarily, and to which he returns as the fit takes him. The following passages will carry out what we have said, and will illustrate the oddity, subtlety, and originality of this writer's language. Malzah tries to exonerate himself, in soliloquy, from the guilt of destroying Saul: —

I've had no part in this. I'm sorry, too,
(Like thee, O King,) that ever I came to thee.
Zounds! why, I ought to have strong penance set me,
Or else be branded with some sign of shame
For having volunteered for his undoing.
There's no essential honor nor good i' the world,
But a pure selfishness is all in all.
Nay, I could curse my demonhood, and wish
Myself to be thrice lost for that behavior; —
But I believe I am a very mean-souled spirit.

Even finer than this flippant, imbecile, and impotent penitence of Malzah is the following song, which seems to us to be scarcely short of Shakespearian: —

There was a devil, and his name was I;
From out Profundus he did cry;
He changed his note as he changed his coat,
And his coat was of a varying dye;
It had many a hue: in hell 't was blue,
'T was green i' the sea, and white i' the sky.
O, do not ask me, ask me why
'T was green i' the sea and white i' the sky.
Why from Profundus he did cry.
Suffice that he wailed with a chirruping note;
And quaintly out was his motley coat.

Saul enters in a gloomy passion. Malzah says: —

Now is my time:
I'll enter him, that he may work his doom:
His mind's defences are blown down by passion,
And I can enter him unchallenged, as
A traveller does an inn, and, when I'm there,
He is himself so much now like a demon,
He will not notice me.

In this poem, for the first time, spirits have been represented in a manner which fully justifies the boldness involved in representing them at all. Malzah is a living character, as true to supernature as Hamlet or Falstaff are to nature; and, by this continuation, as it were, of humanity into new circumstances, and another world, we are taught to look upon humanity itself from a fresh point of view, and we seem to obtain new and startling impressions of the awful character of the influences by which we are beset. Seldom has art so well performed the office of handmaiden to religion as in this extraordinary character of Malzah, in whom we have the disembodiment of the soul of the faithless, sophistical, brave, and generously disposed king of Israel, and a most impressive poetical exposition of the awful truth, that he who is not wholly for God is against him. For proof of our opinion we can only refer the reader to the entire work, of which a few separate passages are no tests whatever. . . . In proof, however, that this writer is a poet of no common order we append a few sentences, taken almost at random from hundreds which we have marked.

Saul has vowed the death of David:—

Queen. Now, my dear husband, come and take some rest.

Saul. Yes, when I've done what I have vowed to do.

I am beneath the tyranny of a vow,
Which I will honor whilst I am eclipsed,
That I hereafter may have power to plead
I did it in the darkness. 'T is the fiend:
He darkens, yet illuminates, my mind,
Like the black heavens when lightnings ride the wind.

Malzah is seen winging his way towards the palace of the King, whom he has been commissioned to possess:—

Lo, where yon demon, with increasing speed,
Makes his dim way across the night-hung flood,
Due to the Hebrew King, with onward heed,
Like to a hound that snuffs the scent of blood.

Saul, like Polonius, is full of wisdom, though it goes no further than his words; for example:—

Full many things are best forgot ; and all
The dross of life, men's vices and their fallings,
Should from our memories be let slip away,
As drops the damaged fruit from off the bough
Ere comes the autumn. It were wise, nay, just,
To strike with men a balance ; to forgive,
If not forget, their evil for their good's sake.
The good thus cherished, banished thus the bad,
As the refiner from the charged alembic
Removes the scum that clouds the precious ore,
We shall grow rich in life's pure gold, and lose
Only its base alloy, its dross and refuse.

The following is one of many passages which, by creating an intelligence of the greatness and subtlety of Saul's temptations, render his example more affecting and fearful. Abner, in reply to Saul's lamentations over his liability to the apparently irresistible possessions of the evil spirit, says : —

Jehovah's ways are dark.

Saul.

If they be just, I care not :

I can endure till death relieve me ; ay,
And not complain ; but doubt enfeebles me,
And my strong heart, that gladdeth to endure,
Falters 'neath its misgivings, and, vexed, beats
Into the speed of fever, when it thinks
That the Almighty greater is than good.